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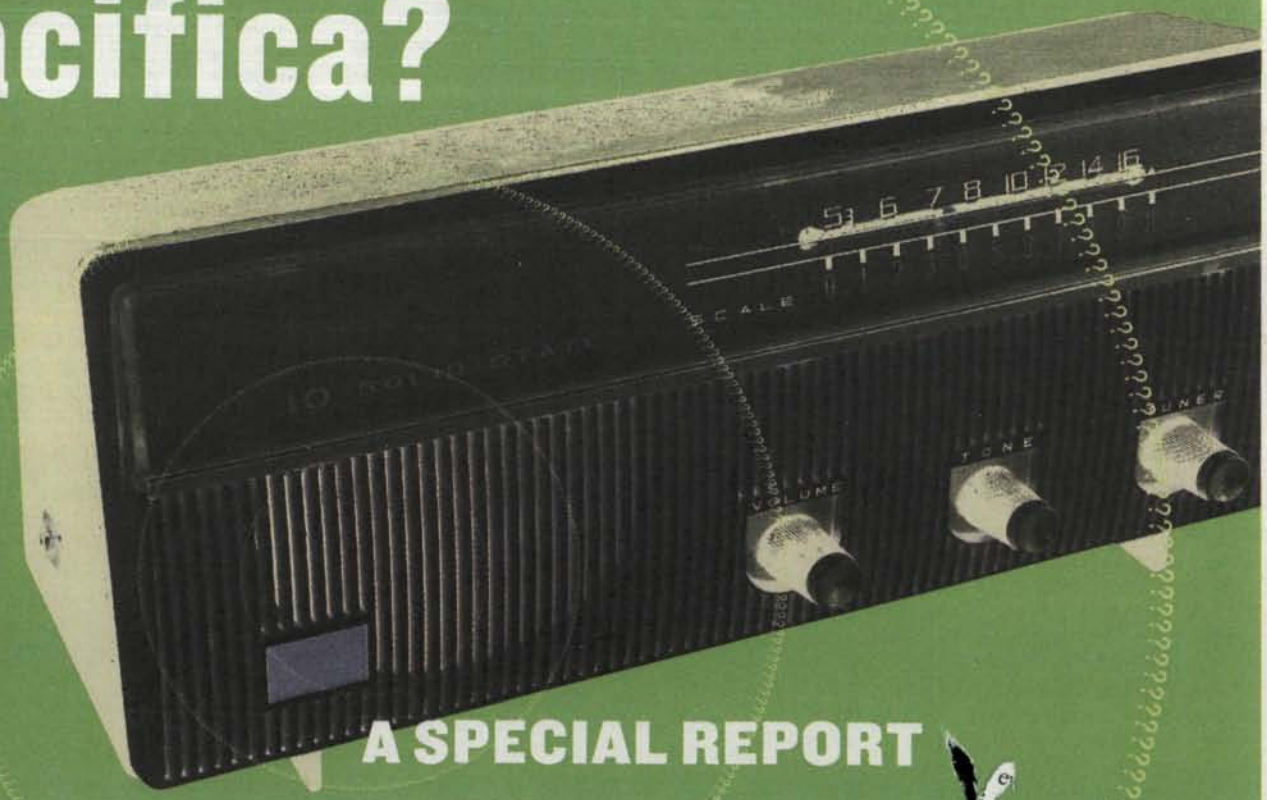

A SPECIAL REPORT
by JOHN DINGES

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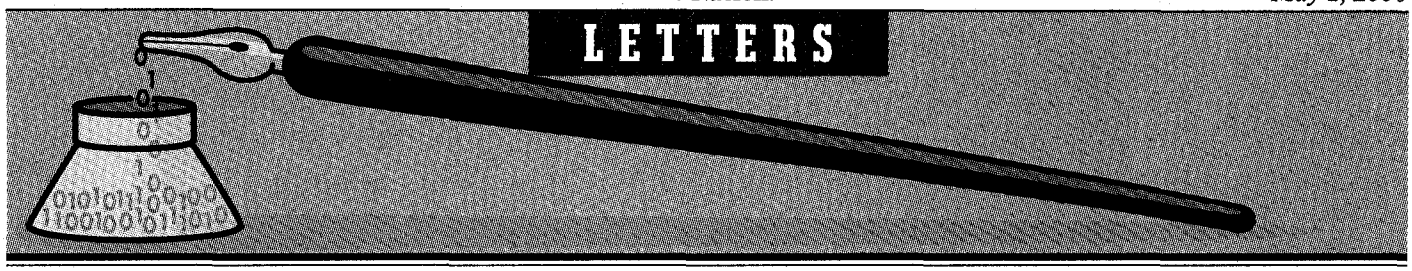

THE AGE OF AQUARIUS?

New York City

■ April 17 will be the thirty-fifth anniversary of SDS's first major march on Washington against the Vietnam War. It drew about 25,000 people. I remember that one of the signs of a rising movement then was that more people often turned out for demonstrations than the organizers expected. May April 16 and 17 in Washington this year signal a similar rebirth. JESSE LEMISCH

THANK YOU, *NATION* FAMILY

Oberlin, Ohio

■ On December 13, 1999, Katha Pollitt's column, titled "Prosecuting Innocence," told our story [see also "Cynthia Stewart's Ordeal" in this issue]. With mixed emotions we report that on April 4, after lengthy negotiations with the Lorain County prosecutor's office, Cynthia agreed to enter into a "diversion program" as a way of settling the case without going to trial.

The good news is that we will all be spared the ordeal of a prolonged criminal prosecution and that our now 9-year-old daughter will not have to take the witness stand. The bad news is that Cynthia had to agree that the prosecutor could destroy two of her photographs, had to state publicly that these two pictures could be interpreted as "sexually oriented" and had to agree to participate in six months of counseling.

Katha's story was the first volley in what became a monumental, protracted and unprecedented battle with a prosecutor known for his unyielding stance. Our community closed ranks around us and petitioned, protested, jammed phone lines with calls, held a benefit concert and a candlelight vigil and ultimately convinced the prosecutor to meet with a delegation, a meeting that led to negotiations between our lawyers and the prosecutor's office. The outcome of the negotiations has one other bright spot besides sparing our daughter. Although the prosecutor did away with diversion programs when he took office twenty years ago, the reactivated program may possibly be used by other defendants in Lorain County besides Cynthia.

The support—financial and moral—that we received from *Nation* readers was a great gift. People sent large and small amounts of money, poems, recountings of similar events, an unpublished short story, good advice, messages of solidarity and exhortations to fight the good fight.

We fought the good fight, and there are even some who say we won. For us there is no joy in the resolution thus far. We hope to use the extensive media coverage of the case to put pressure on Ohio state legislators to change the law under which Cynthia was charged and to raise consciousness on the issue nationwide. Any money left in the defense fund will be used toward these ends and also to help other innocent people facing similar prosecutions.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of you.

CYNTHIA STEWART
DAVID PERROTTA

A HAUNTED EUROPE

The following is a translation of a text by philosopher and intellectual André Glucksmann published February 23 in Le Monde *and elsewhere. The Council of Europe's human rights assembly has just recommended the suspension of Russia because of Chechnya. —The Editors*

EUROPE HAUNTED BY HORROR

■ Grozny leveled, with full impunity; villages burned to the ground, with full impunity; the wounded executed, with full impunity; individuals under torture, with full impunity; women and men raped, with full impunity; international silence, in full complicity.

No intelligible and high-minded condemnation, no diplomatic pressure, no economic sanctions, no judicial prosecution, nothing. By choosing voluntary powerlessness, Europe repudiates itself.

Yesterday, after 1945, Europe was born from a triple rejection. Behind her, Hitler. Beside, Stalin. Ahead, Europe learning to refrain from the colonial wars.

Today, Mr. Putin believes himself all-powerful and unaccountable to anyone. The agonies the Russian state inflicts on Chechnya bring back and legitimize monstrous practices that are latently universal.

Tomorrow, our "moral" leaders blind, our "realpolitik" politicians paralyzed, will ask forgiveness, will do repentance. Too late for the Chechens. Very late for our children.

Signatory of this appeal, I ask for the founding contract to be upheld, a contract against fascism, against colonialism, against totalitarianism. One without which Europe is nothing but an association of small thinkers, a community of shame. RICHARD AVEDON, ANDREI BABITSKI, BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI, ELENA BONNER, PIERRE BOULEZ, JOHN LE CARRÉ, NOAM CHOMSKY, DANY COHN BENDIT, UMBERTO ECO, COSTA GAVRAS, JEAN-LUC GODARD, GÜNTER GRASS, HAAKON HARKET, TONY HILLERMAN, IVAN KLIMA, JACEK KURON, B.H. LEVY, MAURIZIO POLLINI, LORD REA OF ESKDALE, VANESSA REDGRAVE, JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL, RUSSELL SHERMAN, CLAUDE SIMON, BARBARA SPINELLI, ELIE WIESEL *and others, 211 in all*

ELIÁN WRAPPED IN THE FLAG?

Havana

■ When the Miami papers insist that Elián González's father cannot be assumed to be speaking his own mind until he is on "free" US soil, it is to be expected. But when a writer in *The Nation*—especially one who used to consider herself pro-Revolution—buys into the same offensive slurs, one has to sit up and take notice [Maria de los Angeles Torres, "Elián and the Tale of Pedro Pan," March 27]. Flogging shameless US politicians for wrapping Elián in an American flag does not mitigate the anti-Castro, antirevolutionary bias that permeates Torres's article.

Some of the more blatantly inaccurate assumptions Torres offers us as givens: that Cuba is a "repressive system"; that all or most Cubans who leave the island share "a collective memory of repression on the island"; the "impossibility of returning [Elián] to a free Cuba" (because presumably a "free" Cuba does not exist); that "Castro…is now politically isolated" (a hard argument to make when the vast majority of the US population—even more in other countries—supports the Cuban position); the assumption that the handful of Miami-and-Washington-supported "dissidents" have a serious human rights agenda rather than their own self-interest at heart; that Fidel Castro has not addressed the issue of why Elián's mother wanted to leave, and that his defense of Juan Miguel's right to have his son back is hypocritical or "sudden" (in a society that for more than forty years has placed children on its highest altar!); that the Revolution is no longer "socially just," due to the economic difficulties caused by the demise of the Soviet system (and the unmentioned—by Torres—forty-year US attempt to strangle the Revolution economically); and Torres's recitation of restrictions on Cubans who maintained relations with relatives abroad (outdated as far back as 1979, when visits back and forth were permitted by governments on both sides of the Straits of Florida).

One particularly troubling aspect of Torres's article is the denigration of the Cuban people expressed or implied in the assumption that Juan Miguel might not be "free…to say what is really on his mind"—even on the question of the welfare of his son. This is the assumption that permeates so many anti-Cuban (i.e., anti-Castro, anti-Revolution) arguments: that Cubans on the island are gutless, passive sheep, following a tyrannical leader whom they haven't the courage to defy. I wonder if Torres realizes how insulting it is to every Cuban to be told by the outside world that they are so passive (or is it cowardly?) that they won't speak out against or stand up to an allegedly "repressive" system—as their sisters and brothers have done all throughout Latin America—even though the "repression" in Cuba has never taken the form of disappearances, torture and daily, brutal murders (state terrorism), as has occurred in all those other countries. How absolutely gutless those Cubans must be! They must have completely forgotten

(Continued on Page 24)

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IN THIS ISSUE

VOLUME 270, NUMBER 17

2 **LETTERS**

EDITORIALS

3 LABOR AND PROTEST IN DC

4 CYNTHIA STEWART'S ORDEAL

5 HISTORY AND THE HOLOCAUST
D.D. Guttenplan

6 IF POLITICS GOT REAL...
William Greider

7 SAINT DOROTHY?
Maurice Isserman

COLUMNS

6 A QUESTION CONCERNING AL GORE'S RECONSIDERATION OF THE ELIÁN GONZÁLEZ CASE
Calvin Trillin

9 MINORITY REPORT
The Two Faces of Hillary
Christopher Hitchens

10 SUBJECT TO DEBATE
Abortion History 101
Katha Pollitt

ARTICLES

11 WHAT'S GOING ON AT PACIFICA?
A Special Report
John Dinges

22 BUCHANAN HAS A PARTY
He says it's fun—and just to insure a good time, he brings his own guests.
David Corn

BOOKS & THE ARTS

25 SHAKESPEARE: Bruce Chatwin
John Leonard

30 DISCOVERY/*THE NATION* '00 PRIZEWINNERS
Anthony Deaton, Sue Kwock Kim, Andrew Feld, Erin Grace Brooks

32 DYSON: I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.
Jason Sokol

34 FILMS
Rules of Engagement
High Fidelity
American Psycho
Set Me Free
Stuart Klawans

Cover design by Scott Stowell/Open; illustrations by John Copeland

EDITORIALS

Labor and Protest in DC

"This is not your father's labor movement!" yelled Larry Smoot as he hoisted a CANCEL THE DEBT NOW! placard at a Washington rally that began a week of actions to support global justice. Lane Kirkland wouldn't have known what to make of Smoot. He's a member of the Office and Professional Employees International Union and a leader of the gay rights group Pride at Work. He also believes in putting US labor at the heart of the movement that came of age in Seattle last fall.

Smoot and his union cohorts were in their element at the Jubilee 2000 rally, where AFL-CIO president John Sweeney spoke passionately about the need for cancellation of Third World debt. The nuns and pastors who have powered that movement found themselves surrounded by trade unionists in blue UAW jackets and red Steelworkers caps. But coalition building is still a complicated endeavor. The AFL-CIO was slow to endorse the April 16 rally against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which promised to offer not only dancing puppets but a radical critique of global capital. Nor was labor alone in its hesitation; the Sierra Club, for example, a member of the coalition that brought the WTO to a standstill in Seattle, backed labor's April 12 effort to persuade Congress not to grant permanent most-favored-nation status to China but left the April 16 organizing to more activist environmental groups like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace.

And some of the coalition building was troubling, as when Pat Buchanan, who puts an ugly nationalist edge on his anti–free trade rhetoric, was invited to address a Teamsters rally. China-bashing was evident, with Steelworkers president George Becker calling China a "godless society." Said student antisweatshop campaigner Molly McGrath, "I'm excited about bringing labor, environmentalists and students together, but this can't be a movement that's about bashing other countries. This has to be a movement for justice for all workers, in every country."

That was a message Sweeney and others tried to put front and center at the AFL-CIO's April 12 rally and lobbying effort, which in immediate legislative terms was potentially the most effective of the week's events. Labor leaders estimated they had brought 15,000 Teamsters, Steelworkers, Auto Workers and their allies to the Capitol, which they said represented the largest lobbying effort in AFL-CIO history. "I see these American workers as the best friends that Chinese workers have," Wei Jingsheng, a Chinese dissident, said at the rally. "They understand that if there is not justice for workers in other countries, then ultimately there will be no justice for American workers."

At least some parts of the labor movement have kept up the rollicking spirit of Seattle; Steelworkers were planning to deliver Propaganda Survival Kits to House members about to go on Administration-led trips to China. The kits contain a Tibetan flag, a picture of the Dalai Lama and other items that can cause the bearer to get arrested in China. Meanwhile, Representative Peter DeFazio and Senator Paul Wellstone used the current focus on global issues to press for a tax on short-term international currency transfers, the "Tobin tax," as a means of preventing the speculation that caused chaos in several developing countries. "It is time to rein in global finance," DeFazio said. "Last year we heard this battle cry from protesters in Seattle. This week we're hearing it in DC."

Andy Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union, echoed that sentiment as he encouraged union members to participate not just in the April 12 lobbying but also in the April 16 mobilization. "We've got to use this attention, and this energy, to win the fight for workers' rights, human rights and the environment," Stern said, adding that "the only way we're going to win it is if we see the connections between all these struggles." That's a message labor and its new allies can take well beyond A16.

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Cynthia Stewart's Ordeal

Fighting censorship and denouncing prosecutorial abuses are part of this magazine's defining tradition. But usually the victims are strangers. The recently ended child pornography prosecution of Cynthia Stewart in Oberlin, Ohio, because of two photographs she took of her daughter in the bath, is different [see "Letters," this issue, and Katha Pollitt, "Subject to Debate," December 13, 1999]. Stewart is an acquaintance of many at *The Nation*, where her partner, David Perrotta, worked and still consults. After moving implacably toward trial, Lorain County prosecutor Gregory White found a way to declare victory and withdraw, though not without face-saving conditions, including six months of counseling for Stewart and the destruction of the offending photographs. While we are relieved for our friends, and even more relieved that civil liberties found a constituency in Lorain County, the case and its resolution remain troubling.

Stewart's prosecution, triggered when someone at her photo-processing lab called the cops, is part of a disturbing national trend. These labs, given a broad responsibility under state laws to report "suspicious" pictures, are turning in a growing number of ordinary parents engaged in the ordinary business of raising children. Indeed, it's often the most involved parents who are at risk. The police and prosecutors the labs call, with few guidelines beyond their own hair-trigger Victorianism, are wrecking people's lives. In Maryland, a judge threw out what he called a "scary" indictment of a woman who allowed her daughter's godmother to photograph her two daughters at play. In February a 65-year-old grandmother, social worker and portrait photographer in Montclair, New Jersey, was arrested and subjected to a search warrant because of pictures she took of her two granddaughters. Similar cases are pending or on the books in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, California, Florida and elsewhere. The nation's photo labs are turning into vice cops, and the vice cops into art critics.

Sexual exploitation of children is real and a fit subject for criminal prosecution. But the issue is so emotional, and the damage to families and First Amendment alike from these intrusive investigations is so profound, that legislatures ought to step in to require rigid guidelines, including independent-expert evaluation of "suspicious" photos, before prosecutions start.

The Stewart case also exemplifies how, in a "law and order" climate, prosecutors feel free to pressure defendants into deals and plea bargains unwarranted by the evidence rather than admit a wrongheaded case. Prosecutor White's plan to destroy the two offending photos is a case in point. If the photographs were child pornography, they would be preserved as evidence. Instead they are being destroyed, because the prosecutor remains determined to enforce his standards of taste—and perhaps because without them there will be no evidence of his overwrought judgment.

The broad picture into which Stewart's case fits is a national panic over the small subculture of child sexual exploitation. The Communications Decency Act and similar state laws have unleashed a culture of sexual surveillance, in which law enforcement agencies and amateur vigilantes now routinely roam the Internet in the guise of minors, perhaps luring active pedophiles into

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compromising themselves but just as likely entrapping people who otherwise would not, without encouragement, cross the line from fantasy to criminal reality.

The sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a horrifying crime, though it exists in far smaller numbers than the current panic would suggest. Since 1996 the FBI's Innocent Images child-porn task force has opened 2,609 cases. But barely 20 percent of those have generated indictments, and just 17 percent resulted in convictions. This low number suggests that the problem is hardly of a scale to fit the panic. Politicians who know better are terrified to touch this issue, so image-police like prosecutor White run wild. But as Stewart's case shows, to conflate image with real abuse is to attack the integrity of families. To confuse child nudity with criminality only hinders the pursuit of real victimization. Cases like Cynthia Stewart's represent not child protection but the pernicious marriage of puritanism and prosecution.

History and the Holocaust

London

"This trial," said the plaintiff, David Irving, "is not really about what happened in the Holocaust." Opposing counsel agreed: "The essence of the case is Mr. Irving's honesty and integrity." The presiding judge was happy to maintain the pretext: "It is not for me to form, still less for me to express, an opinion about what happened. That is a task for historians."

But from opening arguments to the decision handed down here on April 11, there was not a single day in the libel trial of *David Irving v. Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt* when History was absent from the courtroom. The case was, at its heart, a dispute about not just the facts of the Holocaust but the meaning of history and the politics of memory.

Irving, a British writer specializing in World War II, claimed that Lipstadt had libeled him by describing him as "one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial" in her 1993 book *Denying the Holocaust*. When the trial started in January, Irving repeated his claim that the gas chambers at Auschwitz were fakes and that Hitler consistently opposed the extermination of the Jews. Irving argued that since his views on the fate of the Jews during the Nazi era were true, it was libelous to describe him as a Holocaust denier.

Judge Charles Gray's 335-page decision left no room for doubt. Going even farther than Lipstadt, the Judge branded Irving a "racist" and an "anti-Semite" who had "deliberately skewed the evidence to bring it into line with his political beliefs." On the specific—and highly contentious—question of what happened at Auschwitz, the judge was equally clear: "It is my conclusion that no objective, fair-minded historian would have serious cause to doubt that there were gas chambers at Auschwitz and that they were operated on a substantial scale to kill hundreds of thousands of Jews."

To reach those conclusions Gray had to form judgments about evidence: how much weight to give to eyewitness accounts, when does a document mean what it says (for example Hitler's many references to the *Vernichtung*—the annihilation—of the Jews) and when does a document mean the opposite of what it says (Hitler's equally frequent references to *Auswanderung*—emigration)? He also had to couch his findings in a language that the public could understand and accept. And finally the judge had to take a view on the proper relationship, if any, between politics and history.

On the questions of evidence the judge's performance was exemplary. But his reasoned arguments are unlikely to make an impact on either the Holocaust deniers or their opponents. As the latest incarnation of a paranoid tradition, Holocaust deniers are by nature impervious to fact. For them, Irving's defeat merely confirms his martyrdom; the scale of his undoing merely proves the power of the forces arrayed against them.

For America's growing Holocaust industry, too, victory over Irving is more likely to act as a stimulus than a restraint. In her statement after the trial, Lipstadt described the struggle against denial as unending. Let me be clear: Lipstadt deserved to win her case. But the encouragement that her victory will give to some of the groups supporting her, such as the Anti-Defamation League, in their efforts to police public discussion not only of the Holocaust but of US and Israeli policies, is no cause for celebration.

Before the trial began, Gray told me he was worried, because "judges aren't historians." But in his ruling, the judge repeatedly referred to what an "objective historian" might do. He was right the first time. Historians aren't—shouldn't be—judges either. Irving's problem isn't detachment, it is dishonesty. The Holocaust has always had a political as well as a historical meaning; in America, that meaning has shifted a great deal from the days when the "Song of the Warsaw Ghetto" was sung in memory of the Rosenbergs and conservatives saw a Communist behind every mention of the 6 million. If the ruling in *Irving v. Lipstadt* causes that meaning to be honestly debated, then truth and history will really have had their day in court. D.D. GUTTENPLAN

D.D. Guttenplan, a Nation *contributing editor who lives in London, is writing a book about the David Irving–Deborah Lipstadt libel trial.*

NATION NOTES

Readers living in the New York area, or who plan a visit to same, might be interested in two current attractions. One is the play *Marx in Soho* by longtime *Nation* contributor Howard Zinn (*A People's History of the United States* et al.). The one-man, one-act play at Producer's Club Theater presents a reborn Karl Marx in contemporary Soho explaining why he is not a "Marxist." It will also be playing in selected other locations (212-479-7356).

At the AXA Gallery, 787 Seventh Avenue (near 51st Street), there is a comprehensive exhibition of the paintings of the late Fairfield Porter, who reviewed art for this magazine in the fifties and early sixties. The show, which runs through May 27, coincides with the publication of *Fairfield Porter: A Life in Art* (Yale) by Justin Spring.

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EDITORIALS

IF POLITICS GOT REAL...

The third in a series of new ideas not likely to be heard in Election 2000 but ripe for public debate and action. —The Editors

If politics got real, tax reformers could correct large injustices for working people by cutting the Social Security tax instead of the income tax—the payroll deductions known as FICA are far more burdensome for most Americans. Three-quarters of all wage earners pay more each year in Social Security taxes than in income taxes. Yet the Congressional tax debates always focus on tinkering with the income tax code, which mainly affects people in the highest income brackets. The incomes of very top earners are, in fact, largely exempted from Social Security taxes because collection is capped at $76,200—every dollar earned beyond that point is FICA-free. Alas, only 6 percent of America's wage earners enjoy this special treatment—people who are at the pinnacle of wage incomes, including those CEOs whose multimillion-dollar salaries occasionally make headlines.

So here's a straightforward tax proposal that would begin to correct the tax inequities and modestly redress the gross and growing inequality in incomes: Cut the present FICA rate of 12.4 percent by 2 percentage points and offset the lost revenue by abolishing the FICA cap so that upper-income wages are taxed too. If Congress did both at once, it would come out even in revenue with no impact on the longer-term soundness of the Social Security system. Average working families would get genuine tax relief—$700 or so for a family with a $35,000 income. Anyone earning above $76,000 would pay more—a lot more if they are at the most elevated rungs on the wage ladder. For the CEO with a $1 million salary, the bite would be roughly $100,000 and could reclaim some of the gorgeous income tax breaks this class has enjoyed from Reagan through Clinton.

The *Wall Street Journal* and other right-wingers would naturally denounce this as "soak the rich" taxation. Actually, this approach is what conservative ideologues have always said they wanted—a flat tax. The same tax rate that applies to the wages of janitors or truck drivers would finally be applied to the moguls, too. The FICA tax burden is now split fifty-fifty between employees and employers, but this tax reduction should rightly be directed only at workers' paychecks, on the grounds that they have been hurt most in recent years by the growing maldistribution of income, especially workers at the bottom. Businesses, meanwhile, have already enjoyed enormous tax relief and generally have retreated from their obligations to their employees. A simple test might be applied: A company would be eligible to share in the FICA tax cut only if it were providing standard benefits for all its workers—health insurance, pensions and other elements of job security. Thus the tax cut would provide an incentive for employers to extend healthcare and other benefits to their legions of "temp" workers who are now denied them.

Perhaps the gravest injustice the government has done to ordinary working people in the past two decades was to raise their payroll taxes while reducing income taxes for upper-income citizens and corporations. This was achieved in two steps: first in the orgy of tax reductions led by Ronald Reagan in 1981, then by the 1983 bipartisan "reform" of Social Security that bumped up FICA tax revenue by about 20 percent. The increased revenue for Social Security was allegedly going to insure the system's soundness for seventy-five years, but it piled up hundreds of billions in surpluses that helped the government offset the huge budget deficits generated by Reaganomics. Social Security, as a result, was no longer operating on pay-as-you-go financing but instead was collecting vast revenues from workers in advance—money that the government used for very different purposes. Thus, in a roundabout way, ordinary workers helped pay for Reagan's splurge of tax cuts while themselves getting stuck with higher taxes. A two-percentage-point FICA reduction would end this shell game by restoring the pay-as-you-go system and returning workers to roughly the same Social Security tax rates they had in 1981.

Working people are now being told the system is going broke—again—and must be "reformed"—again. Conservatives keep up the fearmongering by playing scandalous games with the actuarial statistics. Their objective is to privatize Social Security—dismantle the government's guarantee to people—by handing over the system's huge and growing surpluses to the tender care of Wall Street brokers (just in time to perk up the expiring bull market). Alternatively, the workers' taxes will be used to pay down the federal debt—the debt that exploded because of Reagan-era deficits. Workers' payroll taxes are being used to cover the political system's big fiscal mistakes. It's time to give people their money back.

And what about this alleged Social Security crisis? If—repeat, if—a financial gap does develop, taxes would have to be increased or retirement benefits reduced. But a just tax system would protect the benefits and raise income tax rates to pay for it—not FICA. The payroll tax has been stealthily used for nearly two decades to cover red-ink spending by the rest of the government. So calling on general taxpayers, including corporations, to underwrite the system's soundness would only be fair play. Besides, this supposed crisis keeps receding into the future. Last month the authorities announced it won't arrive until 2037.

Some traditional supporters of Social Security agree that re-

CALVIN TRILLIN

A Question Concerning Al Gore's Reconsideration of The Elián González Case

Sure, in our hearts we always knew
That Albert Gore would always do
Whatever it might take for him to win.
How come, then, that this single case
Has caused a lot of us to face
The crawling that he causes on our skin?

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moving the income cap on FICA tax collection would indeed be more equitable, but they worry that it could undermine support for Social Security among more affluent influentials. This caution seems a bit out of date. Powerful moneyed interests, led by Wall Street finance, have been demonizing Social Security for years and financing the right-wing propagandists. So far, however, they are losing the public-opinion battle. Polls show that even affluent wage earners agree that it would be fairer to raise the FICA wage cap to $100,000 (a progressive coalition, including the AFL-CIO and AARP, endorses a higher cap).

Even eliminating the cap would still permit gross tax avoidance by the well-to-do, because so many companies compensate managers and executives with unearned forms of income like stock options. A fair system would redefine the FICA coverage to include those types of compensation too. Bill Gates probably doesn't need Social Security for himself, but he surely wants to pay his fair share to keep the system healthy.

WILLIAM GREIDER

William Greider is The Nation*'s national affairs correspondent. Research by Thomas C. Matzzie of the Institute for America's Future.*

Saint Dorothy?

"Many people think that Dorothy Day is a saint and that she will someday be canonized," left-wing journalist Dwight Macdonald wrote in 1952 in the very first sentence of an admiring *New Yorker* profile. Day was in her mid-50s when Macdonald recorded this prediction. A journalist herself, a convert to socialism in her youth and to Catholicism in her 30s, she was a founder and moving spirit of the Catholic Worker movement. Following Day's example and teachings (and those of her collaborator Peter Maurin), hundreds of Catholic Worker volunteers devoted themselves to living among, sheltering and feeding the poor on the Lower East Side of New York City and in dozens of other communities across the United States.

And, in what turned out to be its most lasting importance, the Catholic Worker inspired and trained several generations of dedicated and talented young activists and intellectuals who would carry its tradition of social justice advocacy from its "houses of hospitality" in urban slums into the church, the labor movement, the universities, the antiwar movement and other religious and secular reform causes. There were any number of radical Catholics who preceded Dorothy Day, but Catholic radicalism in the United States was largely her invention.

Dorothy Day died in 1980, still ministering to the poor. And in March the Vatican announced that it was ready to consider the case for her canonization. If, after due consideration, church authorities decide that there is evidence that she performed at least one authenticated miracle, the Pope can declare her "blessed"; two authenticated miracles make her a candidate for sainthood.

What Dorothy Day would think of all this has been a matter of intense speculation among her admirers. Completely secure in her own faith, she could be quite acerbic about excesses of piety. "We Catholics talk about the saints and the martyrs," she told Macdonald, "but I've heard it said that the Catholic Workers are made up of the saints, and the martyrs are those who are willing to live with the saints."

Day would certainly prove a refreshing contrast to the stereotype of the meek and unassuming female saint. She lacked neither self-confidence nor self-assertiveness. Michael Harrington, a Catholic Worker alumnus who would go on to fame as the author of *The Other America*, recalled of his years at the Worker in the early fifties, "Whenever we made a decision we all had a completely democratic discussion, and then Dorothy made up her mind." Or, as Tom Cornell, a Catholic Worker and Vietnam War draft resister, once remarked, "Dorothy wanted to be an anarchist, but only if she got to be the anarch."

The canonization process can be a lengthy one. To nudge matters along, I'd like to suggest at least one miracle that can be attributed to Dorothy Day—though it may not fit the criteria considered by the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints. And that is that she got away with it. In the grimmest years of the cold war and McCarthyism, while Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York was flying off to Korea to bless the guns that were slaughtering the Communist Antichrist, Day and her fellow Catholic Workers were demonstrating against the Korean War and counseling draft resisters. By the mid-fifties, Day was getting herself arrested in protests against mandatory civil defense drills, an experiment in civil disobedience that would in a few years' time embarrass the authorities into abandoning the annual drills and would also serve as an inspiration to the civil rights and antiwar protests of the sixties. The FBI and the New York Chancery (the administrative offices of the diocese of New York) monitored Day's activism with disapproval. On one occasion she was summoned to the chancery and ordered either to cease publication of the Catholic Worker's monthly newspaper or drop the word "Catholic" from its title. A devout daughter of the church and a shrewd campaigner, Day vowed to moderate the paper's outspoken radicalism—and then carried on as before as an advocate of all her favorite radical causes.

If Day's canonization goes through, will that mean the American left will have its own patron saint? Not all radicals will want to acknowledge her as such (and I don't just mean those of us who fall outside the Catholic fold). When it came to public issues of moral consequence, like preparations for nuclear war, Day would often push the envelope. But as far as the church's teachings on personal morality went, she was absolutely obedient. The sexual libertarianism of the sixties appalled her, and throughout her life she did penance for an abortion she'd had as a young woman. Nor did she ever question the sexual hierarchy of the Church. An influential and pioneering leader, she was no feminist.

But if we hold our heroines and heroes, never mind our saints, to a standard demanding personal and political perfection, we will never find anyone worthy of celebration and emulation. And besides, think how much Day's canonization will annoy Pat Buchanan. I'm rooting for Saint Dorothy. MAURICE ISSERMAN

Maurice Isserman's latest book, The Other American: A Life of Michael Harrington, *has just been published by Public Affairs Press. He is the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of History at Hamilton College.*

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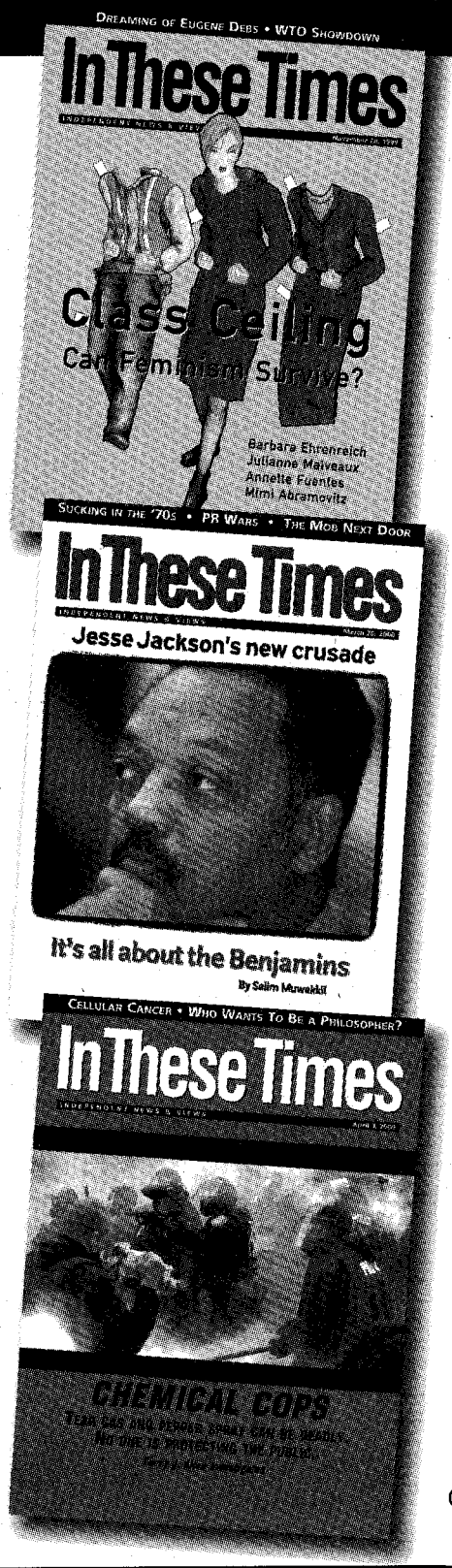
NEVER NEEDED MORE THAN IT IS TODAY.

—NOAM CHOMSKY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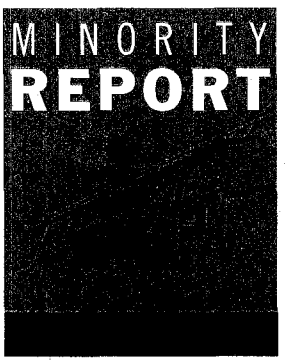
CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

The Two Faces of Hillary



In Edwin O'Connor's classic *The Last Hurrah*, which is the best pastiche of the Tammany style that we have, the real-life figure of Mayor James Curley is represented by one Frank Skeffington. Here he is, as he explains the foreign-policy dimension of local elections:

> "When you come right down to it, there are only two points that really count..."
>
> Skeffington held up two fingers.
>
> "One," he said, ticking the first. "All Ireland must be free. Two," he said, ticking the second, "Trieste belongs to Italy. They count. At the moment, the first counts more than the second, but that's only because the Italians were a little slow in getting to the boats."

The playing of the ethnic card in New York City politics is often lazily assumed to follow the stupid adage of that other great Boston Democrat, Tip O'Neill, who remarked contentedly that "all politics is local." In fact, in the five boroughs, much politics is global. Ward-heeler talk about "the three eyes"—Ireland, Italy and Israel—understates the way in which New York is international. It also, in its traditionalism, overlooks the way in which Asian and Middle Eastern influences have rewritten the score of *West Side Story*. It has been alternately amusing and sickening to see Mrs. Clinton trying to navigate these waters, sometimes in her simpering role as a newly minted upstate suburban housewife and sometimes in her "strong woman" role as First Lady and chief confidante.

Everyone remembers the same dual personality: The woman who claims that "Bill and I talk all the time" (a shudder-making thought in itself) claims not to have talked with him about the amnesty for Puerto Rican bombers. In rather the same way, when her trip to Israel and occupied Palestinian territories turned farcical, she was somehow deemed to have been there as a private citizen rather than as First Lady. This is a White House long used to replacing accountability with deniability—micromanagement of everything from healthcare to welfare, but total amnesia and inattention when things turn nasty—so the quick-change habit has become ingrained by now. My favorite example—apart from the fouled-up, why-was-I-not-told decision to attend the wrong St. Patrick's Day Parade—was Mrs. Clinton's confusion between different cover stories for her famous cattle-futures trade. She was pregnant with Chelsea at the time, she fluttered, and too hormonal to think straight. Strong, independent woman or self-pitying sob sister?

Maybe both. The apparent surrender to global influence-peddling in the matter of Pakistan has been allowed to die a media death. Remember when every liberal knew how to sneer at George W. Bush, not only for forgetting the name of Pakistan's new dictator but for saying that he seemed like a good guy? Well, General Musharraf's regime has now hired, at a retainer of $22,500 per month, the DC law firm of Patton Boggs, for which Lanny Davis, one of the First Family's chief apologists, toils. Perhaps for reasons having to do with the separation of powers, Patton Boggs also collects $10,000 monthly from Pak-Pac, the Pakistani lobby in America, for Davis's services in its behalf. Suddenly, no more Dem jokes about ignorance of Pakistan.

Last December, after Clinton announced that Pakistan would not be on his itinerary when he visited the subcontinent, his former White House "special counsel" arranged a fundraiser in Washington at which lawyers from Patton Boggs made contributions to the First Lady's Senate campaign that now total $25,500. So, not very indirectly, Pakistani military money was washed into her coffers from the very start. Then, in February, another Pak-Pac event, in New York, was brought forward so as to occur before the arrangements for the President's passage to India had been finalized. Having been told that the First Lady did not grace any event for less than $50,000 upfront, the Pakistanis came up with the dough and were handsomely rewarded for their trouble by the presence of Lanny Davis and by a statement from Mrs. Clinton that she hoped her spouse would stop off in Pakistan after all. And a few days later, he announced that, after much cogitation, he would favor General Musharraf with a drop-by.

How does this look to you? One way of deciding it is to try the cover stories for size. "I wish I could say I had the influence and had applied the right pressure for the President to visit Pakistan, but I didn't, so I can't." That's Lanny Davis. Is this what he tells the Pakistanis in return for his large stipend? "If anybody thinks they can influence the President by making a contribution to me, they are dead wrong." That's Hillary Clinton. Is that what she said at the Pak-Pac fundraiser?

One thing that strikes the eye immediately is how *cheap* this is. And inexpensive, too. The Pakistani nuclear junta must be rubbing its eyes: For such a relatively small outlay of effort it can get the First Family to perform public political somersaults.

The problem with Pakistan is that it is a banana republic with nuclear weapons, run by ambitious and greedy politicians who are scared of their own military-industrial complex. Aren't you glad you don't live there?

* * *

Those of you who were kind enough to buy the more recent printing of my book *No One Left to Lie To*, or who are kind enough to purchase the forthcoming paperback version, will notice that there is a change on page eighteen from the original. This is because I wrongly stated that Michael Copperthite, a political consultant in Washington, DC, had been the proposer of a dubious financial donation from the Cheyenne-Arapaho tribes to the Democratic National Committee during the presidential election of 1996. To the contrary, Copperthite has involved himself pro bono in efforts to gain restitution for the tribes. I am happy to make this plain and to apologize without reserve for any such slur on his reputation. Those of you who possess the original should tear out page eighteen (and perhaps consider buying the paperback). ■

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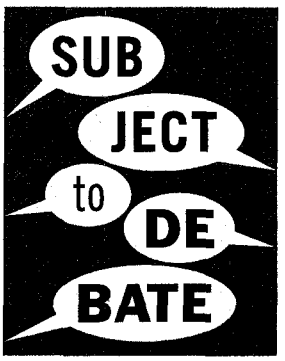
KATHA POLLITT

Abortion History 101



Thirty years ago in early April, three years before *Roe v. Wade*, male politicians—urged on by doctors, lawyers and lobbyists—struck down New York State's restrictive abortion law, under which nearly all abortions were illegal. The measure was supported by Republican Governor Nelson Rockefeller, defended by a senator who had witnessed the death of a young girl from complications of an illegal abortion, and it passed because one assemblyman changed his vote—Democrat George Michaels, who trembled as he told his colleagues that he knew he was signing his political death warrant. Weren't those men brave and noble to take such risks for women?

Yes, they were—if only we had more like them today! But something is missing from what seems to be emerging as the official version of events. In a long front-page story ('70 ABORTION LAW: NEW YORK SAID YES, STUNNING THE NATION, April 9), the *New York Times* recalled New York State's historic moment through the voices of ten people: all but two men, all but two politicians. On National Public Radio and on the air in Albany, the focus was the same. You would never know that women played a role in their own liberation. Indeed, Barbara Shack, then an organizer with the New York Civil Liberties Union, now president of the board of NARAL, helpfully told the *Times* that "the campaign to change the law was largely run by men."

As a policy matter among politicians, lobbyists and doctors, that's true. But policy change doesn't happen in a vacuum—physicians, and politicians too, had watched women die from illegal abortions for decades without being willing to do anything about it. What's missing from these accounts of legalization is the feminist activism that made it happen. Beginning in 1969, radical feminists held speakouts on abortion, at which hundreds of women went public with their own experiences: "I spoke first," recalls historian Rosalyn Baxandall of the initial speakout in New York, held at Washington Square Methodist Church, "and was totally scared—I could lose my job or go to jail. Who knew?" While the legislature was stymied—minor reform bills had been proposed in 1967, '68 and '69 but had been defeated in the Assembly—women lawyers mounted a federal court challenge to the New York State law that had the 1970 legislature terrified of being left with no abortion law at all, recalls Emily Jane Goodman, now a judge. There were demonstrations, a feminist speakers' bureau, lobbying efforts in Albany and brilliant and tireless organizing by Lucinda Cisler, co-founder of New Yorkers for Abortion Law Repeal. There was a flourishing abortion underground—from Jane in Chicago to the Clergy Consultation Service at New York City's Judson Memorial Church—and around the country, people knew about it. In 1969, feminists invaded and disrupted the New York State legislature's "expert hearing" on abortion law reform (the experts being fourteen men and a nun) and insisted on a total repeal of the law, not the minor reforms then under consideration. This dramatic action was widely, if not always respectfully, reported—GALS SQUEAL FOR REPEAL was one headline. "The very moderate reform law of 1969 failed to pass," notes Ellen Willis, who took part in that disruption, "yet just a year later the same legislature passed the most liberal law in the country. Guess all those guys just had a spontaneous change of heart."

Feminists have labored so hard to make women visible, it's galling to see them erased from the legalization narrative—while they are still alive, yet. These are the same women—New York Radical Women, Redstockings—who have gone down in history, inaccurately, as the notorious "bra burners" at the 1968 Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, and whose slogan "the personal is political" is now so widely ridiculed. If the memory of activism and struggle fades so quickly, it's little wonder that legal abortion feels to so many women like a gift from on high, another in the long list of things over which they have little control and which they are constantly being told in one way or another isn't all that important anyway. After all, the reason the University of Arizona hospital doesn't perform or teach abortion today is that in 1974 the university agreed to ban abortion from its premises in return for $5.5 million from the state legislature to build a football stadium—so women's health matters less than college sports, just the way contraception matters less than Viagra when insurance companies decide what to cover. Similarly, Arianna Huffington (sorry, I can't help myself) quotes Marc Cooper's quip that the two parties are so alike, they should change their names to "the Pro-Life Corporate Party and the Pro-Choice Corporate Party"—imagine casting a vote along such trivial lines! Actually, more accurate names would be the Pro–Confederate Flag Party and the Anti–Confederate Flag Party—but racism, even symbolic racism, isn't a laugh line. Women's lives are.

Why does it matter if the role of activism is dropped from the historical record? History denied repeats itself. Today, abortion rights and abortion access are under threat on a hundred fronts—legislative bans on "partial birth" abortions, Catholic-secular hospital mergers, denial of insurance coverage, not to mention arson and violence and a constant barrage of anti-choice propaganda. Young women need to know that abortion rights and abortion access are not presents bestowed or retracted by powerful men (or women)—Presidents, Supreme Court Justices, legislators, lobbyists—but freedoms won, as freedom always is, by people struggling on their own behalf. "Don't tone it down, be moderate or ladylike, or accept the lesser evil," says Baxandall today. How will people get that message if the news media tell them that women's major contribution to legalizing abortion was to say thank you after it was over?

* * *

Around the country, abortion funds help poor women pay for abortions. You can help these always-strapped grassroots efforts by sending a contribution to the National Network of Abortion Funds c/o CLPP, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 01002. ■

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ARTICLES

The Nation has long regarded Pacifica as a sister institution in what sometimes seems a lonely struggle to keep alive alternative and independent perspectives in the media. With the creation a few years ago of *RadioNation*, which airs on many Pacifica stations, that relationship became friendlier still. We were, for that reason, distressed at the problems that erupted last year and in whose resolution we may be said to have a stake. As the crisis heated up, we published pieces by *Nation* contributing editor Marc Cooper, host of *RadioNation* as well as a news show on Pacifica's Los Angeles station, and media scholar Robert McChesney. Columnist Alexander Cockburn also weighed in, and we published a lengthy readers' exchange on our Letters page. After months had gone by and Pacifica's problems showed no signs of resolution, we decided that a full-blown examination of Pacifica was in order and we turned to John Dinges, former editorial director of National Public Radio, author of books on the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and on the US relationship with Manuel Noriega in Panama, and currently a member of the faculty at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University. We anticipate that the issues he discusses in the report that follows will be with us for some time. We invite readers to share their thoughts with us; see also the forum on our website at www.thenation.com.

—The Editors

What's Going On at Pacifica?

A SPECIAL REPORT by JOHN DINGES

Pacifica Radio is in trouble.

If your politics lean toward the left, and you've ever lived in one of the five cities with a Pacifica station, you probably have a favorite Pacifica story, a story about a Pacifica broadcast that made a difference in your life. Mine was driving down a Berkeley street on the day of an antiwar protest in the early seventies, and realizing that I wasn't hearing the station just on my car radio. It was blaring from most of the houses on the block. The sound was all around, and the sound was the Rolling Stones singing, "The time is right for fighting in the street.... The time is right for violent revolution."

Or years later, in Washington, walking around the office at National Public Radio with earphones that felt as though they had been surgically implanted, listening to the gavel to gavel of the Iran/*contra* hearings. Pacifica was broadcasting them live. NPR wasn't.

We always expected Pacifica to be there, to be on the air talking truth to power when the big issues were at stake. Before NPR, and even after, Pacifica set the benchmark for public radio, for public-service radio. It invented the idea of listeners contributing money to a radio station so the station wouldn't have to sell ads or depend on government subsidies. Pacifica trained a whole generation of radio producers and reporters in the kind of long-form reporting and sound-rich documentary techniques shunned by commercial radio, and its graduates include some of NPR's best-known bylines.

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Now, in an era of unprecedented conglomeratization and homogenization of media, independent voices like Pacifica's are needed more than at any time perhaps since the Vietnam War. Its five stations and 800,000 listeners make it still the largest media outlet on the left. Yet events of the past year have cast serious doubt on Pacifica's ability to recapture the role and impact it once had. Radio moments of the present are a far cry from the greatness of the past. They include, at flagship-station KPFA in Berkeley, a dispute in front of a live mike between a manager and an employee he was trying to suspend, a "No Censorship" fundraising drive built around denunciations of Pacifica's national foundation, and programs devoting dozens of minutes daily to rehashing internal disputes. Veteran staff have been fired for criticizing management on the air, there have been sit-ins and arrests, armed guards have been hired (and removed) and KPFA staff have been first locked out, then given virtually unchallenged control of the station. Almost 10,000 people gathered in Berkeley last July for one of the largest political demonstrations in recent years, under banners calling for free speech and local control. Around the same time, Joan Baez appeared at a benefit concert for the dissidents, and well-known figures, including Michael Moore and Noam Chomsky, expressed their support.

One doesn't have to take sides in the current dispute to envision a greater goal: bringing millions into a forum for progressive ideas.

Sorting out who is right and who is wrong in this story is a near-impossible task given the management blunders and heavy-handedness on the one side, and the insults, harassment and threats on the other side. Both sides could claim the pursuit of high-minded goals: Pacifica management sought to strengthen lines of authority in the name of increased audience and political effectiveness; KPFA and its defenders presented a resounding case that "free-speech radio"—Pacifica's traditional no-holds-barred programming—was threatened by a sanitized, NPR-style takeover by establishment liberals.

But measuring the collateral damage is more clear-cut: At the two largest stations, the internal struggle has stopped dead a process of programming reform intended to increase the network's tiny audience and recapture Pacifica's once-undisputed leadership role in public radio and in progressive politics. Total audience for the Berkeley and New York stations, which have the network's largest staffs and budgets, is flat, continuing a trend of the past four years, and the audience for the Berkeley station is now the second-smallest, after Houston. (The Houston, Los Angeles and Washington stations, the three that embraced the programming reforms and stayed out of the disputes, have seen their combined audiences increase by 52 percent during the same period.) The turmoil has also put in jeopardy a promising expansion of Pacifica's national programs. To be sure, stations are still broadcasting, paychecks are still written and listeners still donate money. But it is increasingly clear that as a national organization, Pacifica is adrift.

Beneath the overt conflict are even more serious questions—and disagreements—about Pacifica's viability and effectiveness in pure radio terms. Indeed, the facts are starkly at odds with one of the most cherished notions about Pacifica, namely that its politically progressive programming attracts a relatively small but fiercely loyal audience. Small, indeed, but decidedly not loyal—certainly not as that term is understood in the radio industry. In fact, listener loyalty at Pacifica stations and programs is among the lowest in all of public radio, meaning Pacifica's listeners actually spend most of their listening time tuned to other stations. Public radio audience expert David Giovannoni, who has been a consultant for Pacifica for almost a decade, said the efforts to build audience had produced results that were "too little, too late." The network, he said in a report to the Pacifica board, "is today an anachronism on the FM band, arrested in its development by a small group of people who are similarly stuck in time." (Giovannoni's conclusions were immediately denounced by those who charge that the whole idea of audience growth is a ruse to water down Pacifica's edgy political message.)

Audience is at the center of the conflict. Pacifica's 800,000 listeners may dwarf the numbers of any other media on the left, but they are minimal for powerful radio stations in major population centers—as is the case with the Pacifica stations. More crucially, audience studies show that most Pacifica listeners tune in only briefly—from a few minutes to several hours a week. Pacifica's stations can stagger on perhaps indefinitely with what one station manager called "our hypercore" audience—the small politically committed group that listens, donates and is not shy about weighing in publicly to oppose changes. But why should Pacifica limit itself to preaching to its own converted? One doesn't have to take sides in the current dispute to envision a greater goal: to bring many hundreds of thousands, even millions, into a forum for progressive information and ideas that it was Pacifica's original mission to provide. "Pacifica used to be the leader in attracting minority audiences, in building audience in general and in raising money from listeners—in fact, Pacifica invented the whole idea of listener sponsorship," said Rick Madden, a vice president at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). "Now they aren't a leader in anything. It is just enormously sad."

The heart of Pacifica is its network of five flagship stations with a set of assets any radio programmer would die for: locations in five major urban centers (WBAI in New York, KPFA in the San Francisco Bay area, KPFK in Los Angeles, WPFW in Washington and KPFT in Houston), powerful FM transmitters broadcasting from frequencies in the prime real estate on the dial and a potential for clear, interference-free listening by a combined population of 42 million. Fifty-seven affiliate stations around the country expand that potential audience to millions more. In today's overheated market for radio frequencies, Pacifica's New York and Bay Area stations—which, unlike the vast majority of public radio stations, were assigned frequencies in the commercial part of the radio band—have an estimated value of $80 million and $50 million, respectively.

According to its charter, Pacifica's five stations and their broadcasting licenses are owned by the Pacifica Foundation, which is governed by an unpaid board of up to nineteen members. The board hires an executive director, who hires and supervises each station's general manager. In reality, the board and executive director have rarely asserted much authority, and the

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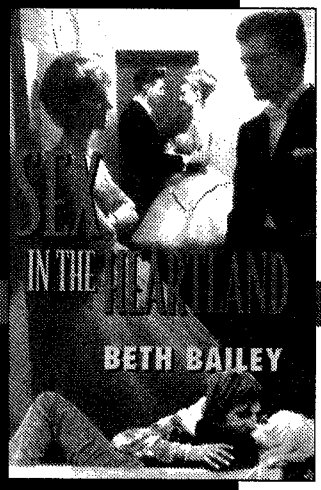

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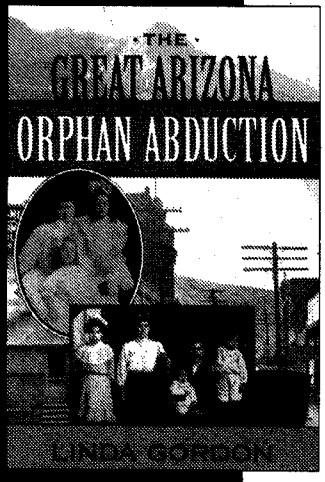

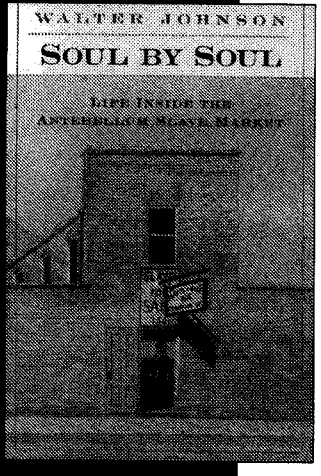

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five stations have been virtually autonomous.

Power struggles always involve money, and Pacifica is no exception. The network has an overall budget of $9.2 million. Almost all the money comes from station fundraising drives; stations also receive matching-fund grants, totaling $1.2 million this year, from the CPB, which allocates funds voted by Congress to support public radio and TV. Individual programs, such as *Democracy Now!*, also supplement Pacifica funding with grants from private organizations such as the MacArthur Foundation. Pacifica prides itself on refusing any contributions from private corporations, and some look askance at even the CPB money. More hotly debated, however, has been the increasing share of station revenues allocated to national (as opposed to station) spending, such as national staff (the executive director makes about $60,000 a year), consultants, a new satellite system and increased national programming. NPR, by comparison, has a budget exceeding $75 million, about 50 percent of which comes from station fees, with most of the rest from private foundations and private corporations, whose messages are put on the air in short quasi commercials known as underwriting credits. Pacifica's full-time staff totals about 150, ranging from eight at the smallest station, KPFT, to about thirty at the two largest stations, WBAI and KPFA.

There has never been a day since its founding by a group of Bay Area intellectuals in 1949 when Pacifica was not a voice of dissent.

For those who harbor stereotypes about Pacifica as a holdover of sixties counterculture, those images are dispelled by a walk through any of the stations. Consigned to memory is the rabbit warren of dingy corridors and cramped studios where KPFA in its salad days broadcast "Street Fighting Man" as mood music for antiwar protests. All five stations have new or refurbished facilities, thanks to building campaigns over the past five years. Studios are Spartan but professional. Gone are the days when, at KPFA, flushing toilets could sometimes be heard on the air. Protest posters and the occasional gray ponytail on a 50ish male are among the signs that these are stations with political attitude. Each station broadcasts a varied mix of news and talk programs, along with lots of music. The idea is to provide programming that isn't available elsewhere on the dial. KPFA has been the news leader, producing a daily hourlong news program with three full-time staff members and two dozen volunteer reporters. It also produces a weekly program, dedicated to the music of the Grateful Dead, that is one of the station's most popular offerings.

At Washington's WPFW, where 50 percent of the audience is black, a four-hour block on Saturday of classic rhythm and blues is one of the station's most popular programs, and one that shows up high on citywide audience charts. KPFT in Houston has heavy doses of Cajun, blues and folk, and bills itself as "The Sound of Texas." ("But we don't do country and western," says station manager Garland Ganter, offering an unsolicited rebuttal to criticism from other Pacifica circles that his station panders to lowbrow popular tastes apparently considered incompatible with lefty politics.) The New York City station emphasizes news and also draws a dedicated following to its afternoon block of psychology and health—including *Natural Living* with Gary Null, author of best-selling alternative health and anti-aging books. And at KPFK in Los Angeles, the biggest fundraising success is a daily politics-culture talk show hosted by journalist Marc Cooper (Cooper also hosts the weekly *RadioNation*, a co-production of KPFK and The Nation Institute, which runs free on 120 stations).

A good share of Pacifica's hardcore politics—and attitude—is pumped out by the daily political interview show *Democracy Now!*, one of only two programs produced by Pacifica for mandatory airing on all five stations. The program is hosted out of New York's WBAI by Amy Goodman, an early and aggressive reporter in East Timor, and Juan Gonzalez, a New York *Daily News* columnist. Last year, Goodman was co-winner of a Polk Award for a Pacifica investigation of Chevron's involvement in attacks on civilians in Africa's Niger Delta; Gonzalez also won a Polk, for his newspaper commentary. The show's in-your-face advocacy style (it bills itself as "the Exception to the Rulers") creates devoted fans, and it is unquestionably Pacifica's marquee production. Stations are also required to carry the daily half-hour *Pacifica Network News* (*PNN*), which features news reports and commentaries from a network of freelancers and a staff of four journalists working out of the Washington station. The show is popular among Pacifica's affiliates (twenty-three stations run *Democracy Now!* and forty-two run *PNN*).

There has never been a day when Pacifica was not a voice of dissent. A group of young Bay Area intellectuals led by Lew Hill, a World War II conscientious objector, created Pacifica in 1949 as an alternative to what they saw as the crass commercialism of American radio. Hill described the objective of Pacifica as promoting "a lasting understanding between individuals of all nations, races, creeds and colors." KPFA was FM at a time when most radios were built with only an AM band; it refused advertising, and it asked its members to become "subscribers" and contribute money for the running of the station. Matthew Lasar, in his book *Pacifica Radio,* about the network's first three decades, described Hill as a pacifist anticommunist dedicated to providing a radio forum for the most diverse exchange of views, a haven of free speech in an era when dissident views on race, war and the emerging American empire were considered unpatriotic at best and un-American at worst.

The station, then as now, attracted people with a deep suspicion of authority, and internal disputes were frequent. At the time of Hill's death in 1957, he was involved in a wrangle with his board of directors over the firing of several employees, and one of the employees was picketing the station in protest. Pacifica's first battle was against the FBI's anticommunist investigations and McCarthyism. As American anticommunism emerged as the foremost threat to free speech, Pacifica's identification with the political left was solidified. Expansion into a network began with the creation of KPFK in Los Angeles in 1959 and WBAI in New York in 1960. KPFT in Houston was started in 1970, and the Washington, DC, station, WPFW, was founded in 1977 with the idea of establishing a predominantly black voice in that majority-black city.

Pacifica acquired a reputation for creative troublemaking and for broadcasting what others feared to touch. "Pacifica is high-risk radio," said a 1975 brochure quoted by Lasar. "When the

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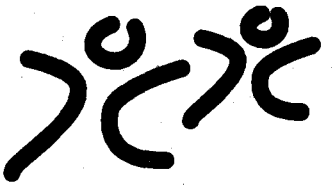

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theater is burning, our microphones are available to shout fire." Pacifica was the first to air Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl," was investigated by the FBI after WBAI interviewed a whistleblowing FBI agent, and it broadcast an interview with Che Guevara shortly before his 1967 execution in the Bolivian jungle. Pacifica sent a war correspondent to Vietnam in 1965, providing some of the first reports directly from Hanoi. Its uncompromising coverage of that war and its identification with the antiwar movement was the high-water mark of Pacifica's impact as a network and consolidated it in the affections and memories of a generation of Americans—most of whom are now in their late 40s to early 60s and still make up Pacifica's most avid group of listeners.

But Pacifica's clout during the glory days of the antiwar movement did not carry over into the later seventies, as movement politics became more fragmented and divisive. A single unifying cause was replaced by a flurry of competing and aggressive groups, each with a narrower interest than before and each with a constituency. Programmers at Pacifica became little more than brokers allocating airtime according to which hinge squeaked the loudest. Once allocated, programming slots were treated as entitlements. In one case, at KPFK in Los Angeles, an elderly activist tried to leave his air slot in his will. In this small world, in which most Pacifica programmers were unpaid volunteers, control over airtime was the ultimate, and often the only, reward.

As Pacifica entered the nineties, many of those inside the organization began to think seriously about growing the audience.

The five stations divided the day into a patchwork quilt of programs, scheduled more in line with a volunteer's preferences, clout and available free time than with any view toward the audience. Lew Hill once remarked that a program serving even one listener well was worth putting on the air, and that became a mantra whenever someone questioned whether anyone was listening. "Pacifica was great in the early seventies," says NPR reporter Mike Shuster, who was a Pacifica UN reporter in the late seventies. "But when the war ended in 1975, and even before when the antiwar movement petered out, Pacifica began to grope for what to do. That was when the splinter programming came in. That was what the left was like then." Pacifica redefined itself as "community" radio, in which community was conceived not as a single city but as dozens of diverse interest groups and political constituencies.

Radio was also changing. Pacifica held a nearly exclusive franchise on listener-sponsored public radio until the late sixties. Then Congress brought together hundreds of educational FM stations into a coordinated public radio system. NPR was created and began to distribute a news and features program called *All Things Considered* in 1971. The news system was funded by Congressional appropriations to a new entity, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which gave operating grants to qualifying stations, including the five Pacifica stations. Dozens of Pacifica reporters and producers made the move to NPR, attracted by better pay and a more stable journalistic environment. NPR's Pacifica graduates include diplomatic correspondent Ted Clark; medical reporter Patty Neighmond; former Pacifica Vietnam correspondent Chris Koch, who became an *All Things Considered* anchor; New York reporter Margot Adler; and Robert Krulwich, who then moved from NPR to CBS and then to ABC television.

Internal upheavals, presaging the current crisis, shook Pacifica's New York affiliate. Programmers rebelled against the Pacifica board's attempt to remove some programs, barricading themselves in the station's control room for almost six weeks in 1976. For a time, management and staff had an active and open discussion of reaping a windfall to put Pacifica back on its feet by selling the station's valuable commercial frequency. The idea, then and later, was to acquire cheaper noncommercial stations with equivalent power and continue broadcasting.

Was anybody listening? When Pacifica learned the answer to that question it was a shock. In the late eighties, when the network began to subscribe to Arbitron surveys to measure its audience, KPFT in Houston had so few listeners it didn't show up in the surveys, while WPFW in Washington was actually declining in audience. The two small stations were running chronic deficits and had to be regularly bailed out by the larger stations.

Yet Pacifica still had great moments as a national network that echoed its impact during the antiwar years. Only Pacifica provided national broadcasts of the weeks of Congressional hearings into the Iran/*contra* scandal in 1987, elevating national correspondent Larry Bensky to journalistic prominence. The national broadcasts demonstrated Pacifica's acceptance among mainstream listeners—audiences surged during the national broadcasts, then dropped back when stations returned to regular fare.

As Pacifica entered the nineties, its signal was reaching 40 million people, but little more than one in a hundred listened long enough or often enough to be measured. NPR stations now existed in every Pacifica market and were attracting the news-hungry, socially active audience who had once been loyal Pacifica devotees. With a far larger news budget, NPR provided wall-to-wall coverage of crucial events like the run-up to the Gulf War and the war itself. NPR's news audience had caught up to Pacifica and was roaring away—growing from 2 million to 8 million in just ten years. In the five Pacifica cities, NPR stations were doubling and tripling Pacifica's audience.

Inside Pacifica, the argument that NPR's success was somehow the result of watered-down programming pandering for popularity was growing thin. Political purity still mattered, but some began to think seriously about growing the audience.

Thinking about audience was already producing a small revolution in the world of 600–700 stations that is public radio. In the late eighties and early nineties, the buzz at the yearly meetings attended by station execs was about "understanding how people use radio." Lynn Chadwick—then a volunteer, later to become Pacifica's embattled executive director—learned her first hard lessons about audiences as host of a feminist talk show called *Sophie's Parlor* on WPFW in Washington. The program aired on Saturday afternoon immediately after the station's most popular blues DJ, known as "The Bama," whose main audience was black men. "I couldn't figure out why we were getting all these calls from men on a women's show," she said. First lesson: A show's audience starts with people already tuned in and grows or

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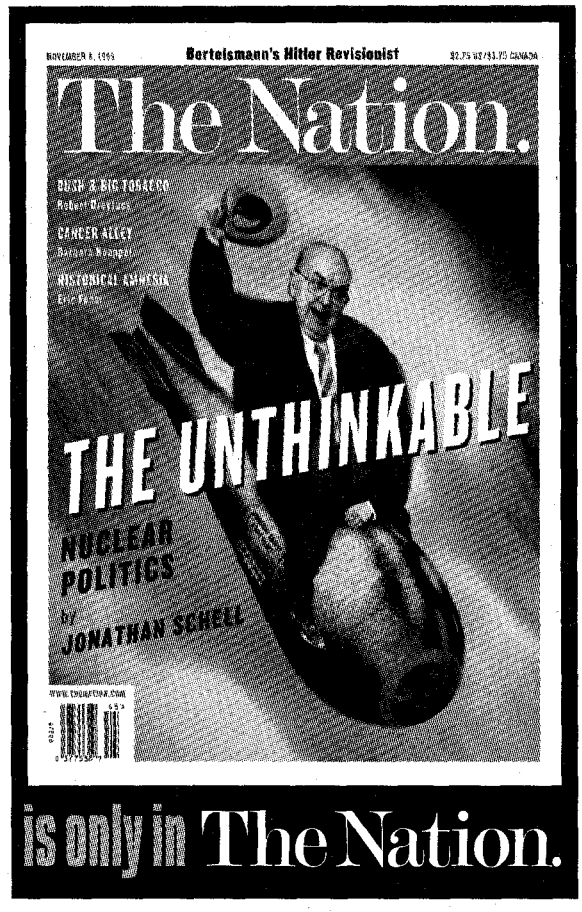

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dwindles, depending on how many tune out versus how many new people tune in. The Bama's audience might have been interested in the Caribbean news and music show coming up later in the afternoon, but by then most of the black men would have tuned out because they had little interest in the white women's issues discussed on *Sophie's Parlor*. Likewise, few of the women listening to *Sophie's* were likely to stick around long for a program on the Caribbean. It was classic "patchwork" in the extreme—programming that caused more people to tune out each hour than to tune in.

The yearly station-executives' meetings often featured workshops conducted by audience experts David Giovannoni and George Bailey, who used hour-by-hour charts to show the way a station's listeners tune in and out during the day. "Back then, Pacifica was the laughingstock of public radio," said Nicole Sawaya, then manager of a small station in Northern California and later general manager of KPFA. "Giovannoni would put up charts about Pacifica to show a programming 'horror show.' Pacifica stations were doing everything designed to drive listeners to tune out: patchwork grids, multiple languages, unprofessional sound, poor production values, rotating hosts."

'My vision was to go out into the schools to let in more of the diversity of the communities of our signal area.' —*Mary Frances Berry*

Long before they assumed leadership roles at Pacifica, Chadwick and Sawaya had become modernizers, advocates of changes designed to build "loyalty"—getting listeners to tune in longer and more often. The changes were actually introduced at Pacifica first by another convert to the audience-building message, KPFA general manager Pat Scott. Named Pacifica executive director in 1994, Scott moved aggressively but undiplomatically. She was heard more than once to blurt out, "No more of this hippie shit." Under Scott, Pacifica embarked on a two-pronged plan: The five stations would build local audience by getting rid of the checkerboard, and they would go beyond the core stations by creating a series of national news programs to be aired on affiliate stations. The idea was to double Pacifica's audience by the year 2000.

The five Pacifica stations embraced the changes with varying degrees of enthusiasm. KPFA began programming several hours of news and public affairs during morning and evening drive time. Staffers generally went along, even when Scott canceled several volunteers' programs, including one that had been on the air for thirty years and that was hosted by Soviet specialist William Mandel, who had led resistance to the House Un-American Activities Committee in the early sixties.

Still, the old ways are visible. Weekdays from 1 to 4 PM are a kaleidoscope of fifteen different programs with at least fifteen different hosts. KPFA's Audigraphics study documents another example on Sunday morning: Audience drops precipitously during the political talk show by Pacifica's brand-name host Larry Bensky. In patchwork style, the show's 9–10:30 AM slot is sandwiched between four hours of classical music at one end and an hour and a half of folk and acoustic at the other.

In September 1997, the Pacifica board elected a new, high-profile chairwoman, Mary Frances Berry, who was energetic, blunt-spoken and came with impeccable progressive credentials. A household name among the younger tier of civil rights leaders, she is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and chairwoman of the US Civil Rights Commission. Berry came in excited about the promise of growth in the strategic plan and with hopes of stimulating interest in Pacifica within African-American communities. And she expected to be an active fundraiser. "My vision was to go out into the schools," Berry said, "to let in more of the diversity of the communities of our signal area, and I was prepared to raise money to implement these plans."

Berry, however, was almost immediately on a collision course with two of the five stations. It had always been an open question whether the board ran the stations or the stations ran the board. Each station's local advisory board, itself made up of representatives of local activist groups, was entitled to name two members to sit on the national board. Since ten of nineteen members were concerned mainly about individual causes and local station interests, Berry saw quickly how difficult, if not impossible, it would be to muster a majority focused on national issues. At Berry's first meeting, Scott pushed a proposal that would have weakened the stations' lock on decision-making, and when it was rejected, Scott, frustrated and burned out, announced that she would resign. To replace her, the board named Lynn Chadwick, who had won recognition and a major award as president of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters.

Change was forced, however, in late 1998, when Pacifica's most important single funder, the CPB, put the network on notice that the presence of local advisory-board members on the national board violated CPB regulations. Berry scheduled a vote on the matter for the February 1999 board meeting. Protesters picketed the meeting, held in Berkeley. Many advocated renouncing CPB money rather than giving up local control. In the end, the board did vote to make local advisory-board members ineligible for membership, but those affected simply resigned their local posts and stayed on the national board.

The host for that meeting was KPFA's recently hired general manager, Nicole Sawaya. In her year at the station, Sawaya had won the trust and affection of the staff, despite her clear alignment with the audience-building reformers and the fact that her previous job had been at NPR. "She was the best manager ever," says news director Aileen Alfandary. "And I have been here for twenty years." But part of that trust had been won by standing up to her new boss, Chadwick, whenever disagreements arose. In preparation for the meeting, Chadwick had instructed station managers to prepare contingency budgets, cutting costs to cover the possible loss of CPB funding. Sawaya, rather than cutting operating expenses or staff, as all the other stations did, presented a budget that deducted KPFA's quota for payment of national programming and national board expenses. Sawaya stood with the protesters, criticizing the national staff and board for bloated budgets and lack of accountability. Mark Schubb, the Los Angeles general manager, shared many of Sawaya's criticisms and questioned whether Chadwick was adept enough for the job of executive director. But at the meeting, which he also attended, he was appalled by Sawaya's lack of tact. "Nicole and I agreed," he said. But she went public. "People heard she was dissing the board to donors. I told her, 'Play politics, don't confront Lynn and the board.'"

Barely a month after the board meeting, on March 31, the last

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day of Sawaya's one-year contract, Chadwick told her she was being let go. The only reason stated: She was "not a team player." Whether or not Sawaya's firing was a good management decision—Berry says she agreed at the time but thinks in retrospect it was a mistake—the reaction that followed approximated a volcanic eruption and a six-month flow of sulfurous lava. A management dispute was about to become a battle for control of KPFA and the future of Pacifica. KPFA staff rose up in open rebellion, which continues today. Here are just some of the main events:

§ On the day Sawaya was fired, Chadwick ordered KPFA's news director not to report the firing on the air—applying a long-standing Pacifica rule against using the air to discuss internal business or "dirty laundry." News director Alfandary defied the order and aired the report. Protesters arrived outside KPFA.

§ Late that night, a .38-caliber pistol was fired into Chadwick's unoccupied office.

§ A few days later, Pacifica national correspondent Larry Bensky devoted seventeen minutes of his Sunday show to denunciation of Sawaya's firing. Chadwick fired him. "I bear the stigma of being fired for speaking freely on free-speech radio," Bensky said later. (The dirty-laundry ban—rechristened the "gag rule"—was unevenly applied. Station news personnel recorded a short statement of protest against Pacifica's board that was played as a disclaimer before almost every show for six weeks. Then, suddenly, in late June, Chadwick took volunteer music DJ Robbie Osman off the air for commenting on his show about the Sawaya firing.)

Protests got nastier, and eventually guards were hired. Protesters called an African-American Pacifica staffer an "Oreo" and "house Negro" as she walked to work through the protest, and they took to jostling Chadwick as she walked into her office. A poster showed Chadwick with bloody fangs hunched over the prostrate female body of KPFA. In late June, as the board was meeting in Washington, according to Berry, a staff member warned the board that an occupation of KPFA was imminent. Management ordered new, tougher guards into the station—and this time they were armed.

Rumors began to circulate that Pacifica intended to solve the problem by selling the station. An e-mail mistakenly sent by a board member to a wrong address confirmed that selling had indeed been discussed and was favored by at least that board member. Berry had denied such reports before, and she denied them again. But the incident set off another outburst. (That the idea of selling a Pacifica frequency should occur to board members was hardly surprising, given the commercial value of the stations. Berry says one board member frequently brought up the idea of selling KPFA and possibly WBAI—swapping them for cheaper stations in the area—to bring in a cash windfall that would put the network on a financially stable footing for decades. But she says the idea never enjoyed more than a small minority of support.)

A San Francisco organization, Media Alliance, called a press conference July 13 to make public the wayward e-mail message. Berry was ready with a denial she expected would be included on the air with any discussion of the issue. In a bewildering example of atrocious timing, however, Pacifica chose the same day to announce to KPFA that it was going to start seriously enforcing the dirty-laundry rule. Predictably, the rule was defied. An afternoon-talk-show host, Dennis Bernstein, devoted a portion

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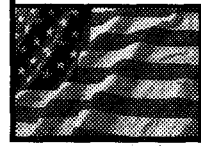

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of his one-hour show to a long excerpt of the Media Alliance press conference—with no reference to Pacifica's denial.

As he finished his program and walked to his office, Bernstein was met by interim general manager Garland Ganter, who had been brought in from the Houston station to run KPFA. Ganter told him he was being put on paid leave and was to leave the station, for violating the dirty-laundry rule. Instead, Bernstein took refuge in the control room of a studio that had just started broadcasting the KPFA nightly-news program. Ganter followed, accompanied by two burly guards. Bernstein protested that his rights were being violated and that he feared for his physical safety. Newscaster Mark Mericle, watching through the glass divider separating the on-air space from the control room, began to narrate the confrontation over the air. The control-room mike was switched on by a sympathetic radio technician, and the melodrama was live at 59,000 watts for all to hear. (Later erroneous reports of the scene said that armed guards had dragged a newscaster off the air, but Mericle's and Ganter's accounts agree that no force was used and that Bernstein's own show had ended before the confrontation.)

Faced now with total on-air rebellion by a unified KPFA staff, Ganter walked to another studio. He killed the feed from the newscast studio where Mericle and Bernstein were speaking and switched the station to archive tapes of past Pacifica broadcasts. With protesters already pouring into and occupying the first floor of the station, Ganter called the police. Six hours and fifty-two arrests later, the station was empty and quiet, except for the chatter of the archive tape playing from the main control room.

The standoff lasted sixteen days. Employees were locked out but continued to be paid as archive tapes, then piped-in music, filled KPFA's air. On July 29 Pacifica management hollered uncle. Berry announced that the station would be opened and turned over to its staff. "This means we will not be enforcing any rules about what is on the air at KPFA for the time being, as a noble experiment," she said.

But far from dying out, the rebellion has escalated into a mini-political movement, fought on the air from the Berkeley station and over the Internet by activists all over the country. In October Chadwick removed (and assigned to unspecified duties) Dan Coughlin, news director of *Pacifica Network News*, a few days after he had written and put on the air a news item about sixteen Pacifica affiliates boycotting his own program in protest against the Pacifica board. Coughlin had been having his own run-ins, and a union employee had recently won a grievance against him, but the timing of his removal made it obvious that he was another victim of the sporadically applied gag rule. The side-taking was complete when the host of Pacifica's other national program, Amy Goodman, weighed in against the Pacifica national board, calling publicly for Coughlin's reinstatement.

A group of freelance reporters for *PNN* called a national "strike." The strikers didn't have the numbers to keep *PNN* from getting on the air, but suddenly longtime contributors to *PNN* who continued to file were branded as scabs. One of those so branded, Saul Landau, who had been writing commentaries for Pacifica for a decade, sent out "an appeal to all progressives" to "stop the Pacifica bashing" and warned that "continuation of what has become a veritable war against Pacifica could lead to the death of the only alternative radio network progressives possess." Signers included Oakland Mayor and former Pacifica talk-show host Jerry Brown, actors Ed Asner and Mike Farrell, and writer Barbara Ehrenreich. A similarly illustrious list, including authors Matthew Lasar, Ed Herman and Robert McChesney, countered Landau with a letter calling the strikers' action "appropriate" and part of a true "grassroots effort." Nevertheless, the respectful tone and lack of political invective in the exchange marked an important turn.

One station manager estimates that the year of crisis has cost the network as much as $500,000, depleting its reserves. In February Berry tried to move beyond the impasse. After standing by Chadwick for months, Berry announced that Chadwick would be replaced by Washington station manager Bessie Wash. Berry also said that she would step down when her term as chairwoman expires in September. In an interview, however, her language was less than conciliatory. "I'm so disappointed, because if these people are the left, the left is in bad shape," Berry said. "The elitism, the paranoia, is boundless. Worse, they use the mantra of free speech as a cover to protect their own little playpen."

She said she now regrets getting involved, and that KPFA activists and even some dissidents on her own national board, whom she called "wackos," used her national stature to generate media attention. "If they could, they would destroy me," she said. "They said I was a fascist, a CIA agent, a black bitch. They said I was going to sell Pacifica and buy some black stations in the South. Because that's what black people do." While acknowledging some errors, she says her tough stance was necessary: "We paid the price. We bore the brunt of it," she said, adding, "But it was contained enough so someone else can come in and heal it."

However, Bensky, the fired national correspondent, framed Berry's tenure as uniformly negative. Berry and Chadwick were guilty of "wholesale abandonment of Pacifica's principles and practices," he said, summarizing those as community control, free-speech radio and Pacifica's role as a provider of alternative political information. Bensky said KPFA, together with its sister station WBAI, is resisting such a top-down takeover of its programming. Another KPFA activist, Aaron Glantz, who helped organize the stringer strike against *PNN*, added a touch of hyperbole: "They have dreams of world domination. That's what this is all about."

After a year of conflict, Pacifica is hardly a place of dreams, grandiose or otherwise. The network's national staff has all but disintegrated. In January national operations were moved from Berkeley to Arlington, Virginia, where they were run for two months out of a borrowed office crowded with unopened file boxes. Then they were moved again, to WPFW's offices in Washington, where Bessie Wash will double as station manager and Pacifica's executive director. Wash made no public statements but signaled privately that she would try to bring peace. Her good-natured style is reflected in her station's laid-back on-air sound, and she is credited with putting the station in the black for the first time and with nearly doubling its audience. In early March, Wash (whose office declined an interview request) visited all the stations. At KPFA she impressed some staffers with her warmth and openness to their concerns, and she left behind some guarded optimism.

But Pacifica activists were not so easily mollified. Websites and e-mail lists noted, accurately, that Wash's station was the most energetic in its application of the gag rule and that she had

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canceled a media-criticism program, *Counterspin*, whose spin was one-sidedly anti–Pacifica board. Other appointments were also suspect in the eyes of Pacifica dissidents. The chairman-elect, David Acosta, was linked to the discussions about selling stations. One appointee, John Murdock, was identified as a lawyer in a firm whose specialties included management representation in labor disputes. Berry's appointment of Ganter as interim program director was described by one KPFA program host as "giving us the finger" because of Ganter's role in taking the station off the air and locking out the staff last year.

On the sidelines, one important constituency, the station managers of Pacifica's sixty affiliate stations, was growing increasingly impatient and expressed concern that the seemingly endless dispute is causing the deterioration of the national programming that is most important to their stations. Pacifica provides the affiliates with a satellite distribution service and Pacifica programs at fees far below those of NPR. (In a move unrelated to the dispute, Jerry Brown, the gadfly former California governor, ended his popular talk show when he ran for mayor of Oakland. Bensky's daily show was cut back to Sunday only, at his request, and has aired only on KPFA since he was fired. Neither program was replaced, leaving *Democracy Now!* and *PNN* as Pacifica's only national offerings.)

'Before, Pacifica was as good as gold to our listeners.... [Now] they want to know if there is an alternative.' —affiliate news director

Rob Lorei, news director of community station WMNF in Tampa, Florida, says Pacifica "shares our values—written in our station's mission statement—of social justice, peace and equality." He added, "We see ourselves as balancing the bias in the mainstream media, and that includes NPR." But, said Lorei, the turmoil, especially the perception of censorship, has gravely hurt Pacifica's credibility at his station. "Before, Pacifica was as good as gold to our listeners. But now we are hearing from listeners who say they don't trust Pacifica. They want to know if there is an alternative. And our listeners aren't political types like you have in New York and California." Lorei and other affiliates say that Pacifica's energies have been misplaced in internal struggles at the expense of moving forward to implement technological changes, such as expanding quickly into online webcasting and direct broadcast from satellites. "Pacifica will become an artifact or a dinosaur," Lorei said. "What's happening in media is passing them by—wireless Internet, satellite radio. They aren't there."

Richard Towne, who runs station KUNM in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which caters to a mix of progressive communities, with special emphasis on programming for Native Americans, joined a one-day boycott of Pacifica programs last October because he wanted "to send a message to the [Pacifica national] board that they aren't doing their job." Still, he said, he applauds the board for trying to move the network in the direction of building up national programming.

What can finally be said to make sense of so conflicted a tale? Pacifica has survived many quarrels, although it is hard to find one so long-lasting and bitter as this one. The network, in its 50s, has still not tapped out the reservoir of political commitment, affection and good feeling it earned in its early decades. There are no problems at Pacifica that cannot be fixed.

Pacifica will always be political radio, but its future is obscured when the language of the debate is limited to political rhetoric. Yes, it comes down to speaking truth to power. But it is also a matter of magnifying the power to speak: Will Pacifica, with the political power of a nationwide radio network, with a potential audience almost as large as NPR's, make a serious effort to broadcast to an audience of millions, or will it be content to narrowcast to its current small core of listeners?

It is a timid political vision that assumes that high-quality, progressive radio cannot be designed for a mass audience. Why is it a political sellout to design political programming that will appeal to significant numbers of the American people? Isn't it deeply defeatist to assume that Pacifica can only appeal to the small crowd of faithful who already listen? I think Marx, and certainly Gramsci, would roll over in their graves at that kind of leftist thinking.

At its heart, the debate inside Pacifica is not a political debate, even though it is cast in political terms. It is a debate over differing visions for the future of the network.

No, the KPFA staff are not ultraleft-overs from the sixties. They are serious journalists with serious concerns about maintaining their independence. Their vision is portrayed in general terms of local control and Pacifica's free-speech tradition, but in concrete terms it amounts to keeping things the way they are. It is a vision that resists putting more money into national programming—the one thing most likely to increase audience. Nor are Mary Francis Berry and her allies cryptofascists or Clinton clones. They want to push Pacifica in the direction of that larger national audience. But for the past year, they have failed to make a convincing case—or any case at all—that their controversial actions were part of a coherent strategy to achieve their legitimate vision. Firing people—for perceived insubordination and violation of a capriciously applied dirty-laundry rule—was hardly a tactic likely to win over already deeply suspicious staff members to the new vision for a growing national audience.

Some quiet progress in this direction has been made, however. The three "reformed" stations—Los Angeles, Houston and Washington—have greatly increased their audience numbers by doing a few simple things that make sense in radio terms. KPFA and WBAI have lagged behind, but they cannot be cut loose or cashed in—not without destroying Pacifica as we know it. The two largest stations have been the creative and journalistic heart of the network and are indispensable to any effort to revitalize its news and public-information programs. Without them, the stations with smaller staffs would face diminishing audience returns—forced to resort to folk music and jazz to continue audience growth.

NPR's success has already demonstrated that it is not music but news and serious public-affairs programming that build loyalty among the kind of people who listen to both NPR and Pacifica—concerned, socially active, racially diverse, educated and, yes, left-of-center citizens. But Pacifica does not have to become like NPR to gain its share of that audience. NPR went for and won the franchise for mainstream, straight journalism on radio. That leaves Pacifica free to reinvigorate the franchise

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it already owns: smart, in-your-face, contrarian coverage of the news with a preference for the progressive agenda. That is what Pacifica's sixty affiliates are clamoring for—even though of late they have become wearily skeptical that they will ever get it.

It is no mystery to anyone that the fighting must end for that to be accomplished. The mutual demonization must stop. Tension between national organizations and their local affiliates is inherent in the relationship—no matter what the organization or its politics. Consensus-building always works better than hierarchical decision-making. Pacifica's national leadership must lead the way out of the impasse. Two changes—call them concessions if you want—would help. One, the Pacifica board must rebuild its lost authority by creating a national governance structure that reconciles the stations' local community connections with the ability to implement national programming strategy. Second, let the journalists make the journalistic decisions. That simple principle was advocated in interviews with journalists on both sides of the conflict, including Larry Bensky and Mark Mericle of KPFA and Mark Bevis and Don Rush of *Pacifica Network News*. It is an approach that must include dumping the unworkable dirty-laundry rule and allowing Pacifica's news editors to formulate consistent editorial policies on how to cover news about Pacifica itself.

Pacifica has risen and then lost its way in perfect harmony with the waves of vitality and confusion in the American left. Perhaps Pacifica's next golden radio moments must await a new generation and the refocusing of the progressive movement itself. ■

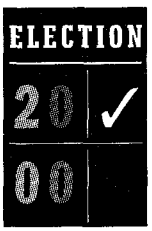
HE SAYS IT'S FUN—AND JUST TO INSURE A GOOD TIME, HE BRINGS HIS OWN GUESTS.

Buchanan Has a Party

DAVID CORN

JOHN COPELAND

On a recent Saturday afternoon, 120 or so Virginians gathered in a conference room at a slightly dingy, along-the-highway Holiday Inn in suburban Richmond to share their concerns about American politics. At one table, Lorraine Swedo, a 39-year-old nurse, complained that the Clinton Administration has "sold out" the country, been too cozy with the UN and "infringed on our rights as citizens." Kevin McPhail, a 33-year-old airline maintenance worker and a former Republican precinct captain, groused that "the Republican Party has no backbone. It's all corporate Wall Street." Bill Elliot, a 73-year-old retired accountant, remarked, "We have to get control over the special interests. George W. Bush has neglected low-income people in Texas and is so busy playing footsie with corporations. With Democrats and Republicans, we need a choice for none of the above." Bev Morrisey, a 46-year-old antiques dealer, maintained that politics-as-usual will remain trivial as long as abortion continues: "Abortion is the nose under the camel's tent. The next thing they're killing old people, selling body parts, and then we're not worth anything, and they can kill you whenever they want." Maynard Wright, a 49-year-old former tobacco-industry mechanic, exclaimed, "Republicans are acting like Democrats. I can't even own a gun anymore.... I am no longer a parent at all. If I spank my children, I can go to jail. I'm fed up with the whole situation."



Across the room, on the other side of the cold-cuts buffet, Susan Davis, a middle-aged Richmond resident, noted that she craves a presidential candidate who will champion political reform. Sitting next to her, Dick Faglie, a retired realtor, maintained that the US government has been transformed from "a republic to socialism." A lifetime member of the John Birch Society, Faglie came to this meeting with about a dozen other Birchers. "See that man over there?" Faglie pointed to a fellow wearing a large anti-Clinton button. "He's with the American Party." Indeed, it was Al Moore, vice chairman of the tiny, far-right outfit that in 1984 and 1988 nominated a presidential candidate who urged the establishment of a "Christian Republic."

Welcome to the "organizing convention" of the Reform Party of Virginia—Pat Buchanan's Reform Party. Which may not be the *real* Reform Party, according to leaders of the original Reform Party affiliate in the state. It's complicated. But one part of the picture is clear: Buchanan has not been encountering much trouble in taking over the party that Ross Perot built and that then became a shell. Consequently, he is well along the way to obtaining the party's presidential nomination and $12.6 million in federal funds for his rage-against-the-political-machine campaign.

As Buchanan has done across the country, in Richmond he flooded a Reform Party meeting—if that's what it was—with people listed at Buchanan headquarters as contributors or supporters. "They're all ours," crowed Bay Buchanan, Pat's sister and campaign manager. Pat's goal is no secret. He and Bay want the state affiliates to elect their people as Reform Party delegates, for delegates to the party's convention this summer will have the power to reject or confirm whoever wins the party's national presidential primary. Their on-the-ground, state-by-state strategy, according to Pat, is to "merge our folks" with the Reform Party locals: "We don't care who has what position in a state party. All we're interested in is delegates. The [Reform Party] people who say this is a hostile takeover are those who won't work with us." At the moment, Buchanan has no serious competition. Donald Trump and Jesse Ventura have fled. Perot is virtually in hiding. But in case Perot mounts up or another contender emerges, Buchanan wants the convention delegates in his pocket.

In many states, the Buchanan forces have been able to grab the

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reins with ease. But in several, there have been nasty tussles—which partly reflect the mud wrestling that occurred within the party at the national level. Buchanan friendlies did triumph in the national tug-of-war, and now Pat Choate, a Buchanan ally, is the party chairman. But in New Hampshire, the acting state chairman of the party sued the Buchanan campaign for $10 million for "wrongful use of its name." In Virginia, the longtime leaders of the party accused several colleagues of betraying it by forming a new affiliate that expropriated the Reform Party moniker and then collaborated with the Buchanan campaign to hold what the incumbent leadership considered a sham meeting in Richmond. "I've never seen anything so evil in my life," said Sue Harris DeBauche, the chairwoman of what was (or still may be) the Reform Party of Virginia. Ultimately, state-level feuding is not likely to slow Buchanan. With Choate managing the party and with Buchananites victorious in most states so far, Buchanan can be expected to rule at the convention.

Buchanan has repeatedly said his goal is a Reform Party that is 'conservative, populist and traditional to the core.'

The old-guard-versus-Buchanan bickering hardly registers with the Buchananites flocking to the party. "What we all have in common at this table," Morrisey declared, "is that we see our country going up in smoke." Buchanan knows that. When he spoke at the Richmond gathering—after district chairs, all Buchanan supporters, had been elected—his message was responsive to the fears of the people before him. "What's happening to the country I grew up in?" he asked. The Chinese are pushing us around. ("They're threatening our friends in Taiwan with missiles that, thanks to Mr. Clinton's friends, have components that say 'Made in the USA.'") OPEC and Mexico are pushing us around. ("I'd tell the Saudi king to take a look at the [US Navy] ships in the gulf and say, 'You pump oil or they're going home.'") Would Andrew Jackson "take it"? he wondered. *Sovereignty*—that's the number-one issue, he proclaimed. *National sovereignty.* Making darn sure no foreigner is playing Uncle Sam for a sap and no member of the American elite, in pursuit of corporate profits or dreamy multilateral visions, is selling out the hard-working citizens of America. "Isn't that what those boys stood up for at Lexington?" Buchanan bellowed. "No one from overseas...will tell us how to govern ourselves." And Buchanan, of course, is the only presidential candidate wise to what's going down. Al Gore supports the global-warming Kyoto treaty, which dares "to tell us how much oil to use." And George W. Bush is too dense to realize the real score. ("He's being home-schooled by Condoleeza Rice in foreign policy.")

So Buchanan says no to permament normal trading status for China, no to NAFTA, no to the WTO. ("I was at Seattle," he boasted. "I did not throw that can through that Starbucks window." Wait a beat. "It was the guy beside me." Everyone laughed.) The enemy, Buchanan asserted, is "one-world government." Not Serbia: He decried the US bombing there. ("Every US soldier out of the Balkans within a year. Every soldier out of Europe within four years.") Look at Europe, he warned. It's heading toward a common currency and a common defense: "They are disappearing as countries. That is the great struggle for me in my lifetime." Without Buchanan in the race, the "idea of sovereignty" will not be addressed. "When I take that oath as President, their New World Order comes crashing down." The crowd jumped to their feet and cheered. "These are the causes," Buchanan said in a near shout, "that brought me to the Reform Party."

No surprise: Buchanan, in his bid to bodysnatch the Reform Party, has been playing to neo-isolationist populists of the right. He is not shy about his intentions. He has repeatedly said his goal is a Reform Party that is "conservative, populist and traditional to the core." In pursuit of the party's nomination and all that money, Buchanan hasn't modified his to-the-max conservative views: criminalizing abortion (he attacks Bush for not promising to appoint antiabortion judges), opposing gay rights, rolling back affirmative action, restricting immigration, obliterating the NEA and the Education Department, decrying gun control and praising the Confederate flag ("a banner of honor, courage, heroism and defiance"). But Buchanan has shifted his emphasis. He's still a foot soldier—no, make that a major—in the culture war, but foremost he's a field marshal in the crusade against global elites, a workingman's hero in the black-and-white conflict between Main Street and Wall Street.

Buchanan gets a kick that his right-wing populism targets the same foes as left-wing populism: transnational corporations, politicians addicted to special-interest money, global institutions that serve capital over all else. "Hey, the Christian Coalition is supporting the WTO, and I'm out in the streets of Seattle with the sea turtles," he said two days after the Richmond meeting, while breakfasting at the University Club in Washington. He talked up a new Bill Moyers documentary, *Surviving the Prosperity*, which documents the economic insecurity that exists in these supposedly flush times. In a Harvard speech, he blasted the campaign finance system: "Neither Beltway party is going to drain this swamp, because to them it is not a swamp at all but a protected wetland and their natural habitat. They swim in it, feed in it, spawn in it."

Buchanan's solution to the mess, though, is retro. Mostly, he's for stopping globalism, not countering it—as if he can put the United States into a time machine and punch the button for 1953. He doesn't seek to strengthen putting-people-first government as a countervailing force to global corporatism. (He is still a tax-cutting, small-government conservative.) He doesn't yearn for multinational institutions that can fight for international workers' rights or human rights. He scorns worldwide environmental accords that might limit American prerogatives. He is delighted to obtain support from unionists. In Ames, Iowa, last year a band of Teamsters held an anti-NAFTA rally with Buchanan outside his campaign tent. But he remains leery of Big Labor—a throwback to his days in St. Louis when, as a young newspaper editorialist, he had to join a union against his will in order to keep his job. In his Richmond speech, Buchanan did not mention campaign finance reform. "Those folks there," he later explained, "are patriots, America-Firsters, stay-out-of-war, populist, working middle-class folks.... They'll cheer a line about campaign finance reform. But they will cheer other lines louder. They look at campaign reform as dealing with the buying and selling of America. Some of them are into the process. But most are concerned with

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the policies that come out." He advocates same-day registration and easier ballot access for third-party candidates (you betcha), but his campaign reform plan, while abolishing soft money from unions and corporations, would allow wealthy individuals to contribute more and independent spending to go unrestricted. He would provide no public funds—clean money, that is—to candidates who want to eschew special-interest donations.

Buchanan's third-party candidacy keeps him in the picture, on television and in front of adoring, applauding audiences, even if he has to trudge to less-than-luxurious hotels to speak to small gatherings, while Gore and Bush appear before bedazzling rallies. "Heck," he said, "this is fun. If you had 120 people, a crowd like that, in Iowa at the early stage of the campaign, it would mean you win in November." This doesn't feel like rinky-dink politics? "Nah," Buchanan replied. "We're building something."

It's not all been pretty. In political and media circles Buchanan's break with the GOP was regarded widely as a calculated move of ambition, not principle. And the switch, opportunistic or not, came at what seemed a desperate time for him, when he was besieged with criticism for his book *A Republic, Not an Empire*, which questions US and European opposition to Hitler prior to Pearl Harbor. He has hooked up with a party easy to deride as a dysfunctional, lawsuit-riddled circus. His negative ratings are the highest of the presidential wannabes. He has been attacked for forging a bizarre alliance with Marxist-Leninist political cult leader Lenora Fulani, who, pre-Buchanan, burrowed into the Reform Party. (Fulani, like Buchanan, has been accused of anti-Semitism.) "Fulani endorsed us—made no demands for me to alter my views—and threw Trump off the ballot in New York," Buchanan explained. "I'm all for that. Listen, Nixon went to China."

For Buchanan, the flak is merely a reminder of the danger he poses to the Establishment. And he loves it. Remember New Hampshire in 1996? he asks. Back then he set the state on fire, bested GOP front-runner Bob Dole and nearly undid the entire GOP. "K Street went bananas," he said. "Being in Washington at that time was like being in Paris in 1940 and hearing the news that Rommel had broken through in the Ardennes." Buchanan then guffawed heartily: "That might be an unfortunate comparison."

What does Pat Buchanan want from this campaign? Attention, a chance to shape the national discussion. He's not worrying about swiping votes from Bush and aiding Gore. (The potential Buchanan impact on the presidential race "is more complicated than people realize," said a senior Republican Party official. "If his shtick is isolationism and trade, he may steal more from the Democrats than from us. If it's a social conservative message, he'll take more Republican voters. But, at this point, we're not spending a lot of time thinking about him.") Certainly, Buchanan wouldn't mind being President. He could do real-life *Crossfire* with Chinese President Jiang Zemin. But his other, slightly less far-out fantasy is bagging 25 percent of the vote. That would earn the Reform Party the same amount of federal funds the Democrats and Republicans will receive in 2004. The key to approaching that miracle—and the key to rising above a few measly percentage points—is pushing his way into the presidential debates. Without that, Buchanan acknowledged, he is probably sunk. But a commission controlled by Democrats and Republicans has decreed that only candidates above 15 percent in the polls should be admitted to the debates—and Buchanan is far from that. Blasting the debate gatekeepers will be a large part of his campaign. And he does have a point: "How do you say a candidate can get federal funds but shouldn't be in the debate?"

Though his state-by-state, scorched-party march is obsessively aimed at claiming the nomination, Buchanan maintained he is out to create "a permanent institution...a real second party," for there is no "clarity" within the current political duopoly. "But at the end of the day," he vowed, "there will be a strong Buchanan party, and then American politics will have clarity." By the way, maybe, just maybe—even if it's an extremely long shot—Buchanan's newly adopted party will be on equal financial footing with the big-boy parties in 2004, when Buchanan will be 65 years old, four years younger than his hero Ronald Reagan was when he was elected President. From controlling a $12 million sideshow to commanding a $70 million–plus frontal assault—Pat Buchanan has a dream. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
their centuries-long history of struggle for independence, sovereignty, dignity and a just social and economic order! Does Torres really hold what were once her own people in such low esteem?

There is insufficient space here to tackle Torres's many misstatements, so I invite readers to write me at kwald@infomed.sld.cu for a fuller discussion. KAREN LEE WALD

TORRES REPLIES

Chicago

■ Karen Lee Wald's characterization of critics of Fidel Castro as anti-Cuban implies that to be Cuban, one must be pro-Castro, not unlike the slogan "America—love it or leave it." Wald does not seem concerned about the lack, in Cuba, of freedom of speech and the press, the right of assembly or to open elections, but surely she would be outraged if the US government denied them to Americans.

I do agree with Wald's assertion that Cubans can speak out. They do. But note her reaction to those who criticize the government. Dissidents are "self-interested," and concerns about whether Juan Miguel González was speaking his mind about staying in Cuba are dismissed as attacks on the Cuban people. Why not report and explore these concerns? These are not misperceptions about what happens on the island. There are laws that prohibit Cubans from making statements critical of the government or its leaders to foreign journalists like Wald. Indeed, there are numerous examples of people being jailed for doing so. Independent publications are prohibited. Money and political procedures restrict access to information—*The Nation*, for instance. Dollars (not available to everyone) and government permission are needed to have a computer and an e-mail account, which does not even include access to the Internet. Wald has both. Indeed, she is able to live in Cuba, a right denied to Cubans who leave the island. But the double standard of privilege does not seem to bother Wald. Perhaps it is a colonial legacy that colors the way she views events and people on the island. But given the postcolonial era of globalization, isn't it time for economic and political rights for all people?

MARIA DE LOS ANGELES TORRES

CORRECTION

In David Barsamian's interview with Noam Chomsky in last week's issue, we misspelled the name of the US representative at the IMF, Karin Lissakers.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Compleat Walker

JOHN LEONARD

BRUCE CHATWIN.
By Nicholas Shakespeare.
Nan A. Talese/Doubleday. 618 pp. $35.

Shortly before he died, Bruce Chatwin found God. This was on top of Mount Athos, after which he left for Katmandu. Looking down from the bees and grapes, he had seen an iron cross on a wet rock. "I had no idea," he told his wife, Elizabeth. So he made time in his frenzied dying to hallucinate a Christos Pantokrator and convert to Greek Orthodoxy. The day after a memorial service for him in the Cathedral of St. Sophia in surprising Bayswater—where, as a matter of odd fact, a satanic Salman Rushdie first heard about the *fatwa* on his head—Elizabeth flew to Greece to bury her husband's ashes on the island of Kardamyli, next door to a ruined Byzantine chapel lapped at by olive trees, wild garlic and wild geraniums.

One wishes the end of the "songline" had been more subversive. About almost everything else in a lifetime of running away from his country, his marriage and his sexuality, Chatwin was unorthodox, with "the nomad's contempt for the pyramid." Once, on an undulating "leopard-spotted" savannah, he had declared an altogether different faith: "For whenever I went back to that Africa, and saw a camel caravan, a view of white tents, or a single blue turban far off in the heat haze, I knew that, no matter what the Persians said, Paradise never was a garden but a waste of white thorns."

Maybe he just liked smoky icons and singing monks. Maybe, with his legs paralyzed ("my little boys," he called them), there was nowhere else to run. Maybe a mind so far gone as to imagine that the filmmaker Werner Herzog had healing powers and that the blood of a Nubian slave was a cure for AIDS, needed divine help. Or maybe God was the ultimate item to be purchased with a postdated check on his last crazy shopping spree, like the Bronze Age armband, the Assyrian quartz duck, the Han tortoise inkwell, the wax bozzetto of Neptune, a portable twelfth-century altar from Lausanne and a Tibetan tiger rug. All of a sudden, the nomad wanted to possess everything, as if he were an Utz.

Aesthete, vagabond, crackpot, fabulist, fugitive: Nicholas Shakespeare's spellbinding biography allows us to hold all these Chatwins in kaleidoscopic focus simultaneously. In a Sotheby's uniform of silk tie, slip-on shoes and a gray suit from Henry Poole on Savile Row, or a Lawrence of Arabia djellaba, or hiking shorts with knee socks (to cover up his varicose veins), or the shawl he claimed was Freud's, babbling on about paleontology, John Donne and the influence of Simonides of Ceos on the memory techniques of Counter-Reformation Jesuits in China, he was a blue-eyed "compass without a needle," a masked harlequin, "arch improviser, zany trickster, master of the volteface...Mr. Chameleon himself"—the talking animal as performance artist.

Aesthete, vagabond, crackpot, fabulist, fugitive: This spellbinding biography allows us to hold these Chatwins in kaleidoscopic focus.

Shakespeare, whose career as a novelist Chatwin encouraged, had access to the moleskin notebooks and the widow's good will. He spent almost a decade tracking the books across borders back to their author, from the black hills of Wales to the slave coast of Dahomey to the outback, the pampas and Prague. He's chatted up everybody with a peppy opinion, from old friends, extant relatives, former lovers, testy scientists and resentful natives, to the luminary likes of Sybille Bedford, Roberto Calasso, James Ivory and Susan Sontag, plus of course Rushdie, who was amazed in Australia to find himself traveling with someone who talked more than he did. Like a shamus, Shakespeare puzzles missing pieces, pounces on aggrandizement and

John Leonard's latest book is When the Kissing Had to Stop *(New Press).*

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evasion, plugs holes in cover stories and stops to marvel at mean-street seediness (for instance, the S/M bathhouse/leather bar/Mapplethorpe scene in seventies New York). Like an epicure, he luxuriates past the point of wallow in so much wanton artiness (an Etruscan bronze! an Ingres interior! a Ngoro lacquer snuffbox! an Easter Island canoe paddle!). Like a therapist, he empathizes and exorcises (Bruce was in denial the way Napoleon was itchy). And like, of course, a novelist, he relishes every contradiction—hypochondrias and mythomanias; the longing to lose yourself in sand dunes but only after having gone horseback riding with Jacqueline Onassis in black gold pajama pants; the walkabouts and vanishing acts that circled round to home. (This "mother of all grasshoppers," who desired men more than women and wrote his books in other people's houses anywhere but England, ended up back with the wife who never divorced him because she was Catholic.)

Much is also made of the famous Chatwin style and photographic memory, that transfer of graphic ideas into words with "the exact skill of a botanist or a sniper," seeking the prose equivalent of "the abstraction he admired in Sung dynasty painters, of flattened forms suspended in space with no suggestion of depth"—more like Daumier or the watercolors of Cézanne than Proust or Joyce; more Russian than English (Chekhov, Turgenev, Mandelstam, Babel, Bunin) and more French than Russian (Flaubert, Stendhal, Racine), with a dash of Hemingway's Cubism and a chilly pinch of Ernst Jünger. Not for nothing, at his second-rate public school, did Bruce play the part of the Mayor in Gogol's *Government Inspector* and of Mrs. Candour in *School for Scandal*. Nor for nothing, when his father couldn't afford to send him to Oxford, did he apprentice at Sotheby's among Netsuke carvings, Syrian limestone antelope reliefs and the usual Impressionists, before fleeing to Edinburgh, archeology and Sanskrit, somehow imagining he'd turn himself into, if not Malraux or Indiana Jones, at least a Howard Carter (discovering Tut's tomb) or a Prosper Mérimée (inspecting monuments for the French admiralty). And certainly not for nothing did he serve a three-year stint as a roving correspondent for the *Sunday Times Magazine*, where he learned to write with clarity, for an audience, to a deadline—and from which he fled again, this time famously to Patagonia.

According to Rushdie: "He was very scared. He was telling stories to keep the Jungle Beast away, the false sabre-tooth, whatever it is. The Beast is the truth about himself. The great truth he's keeping away is who he is."

Yes, indeed. But I am trying to recall what it felt like to read his books without knowing who he was, to experience the exotic absence of an author from his own pages, to crack open the astonishing *In Patagonia* (1977) expecting yet another snotty English travelogue and discovering instead a "Wonder Voyage" that asked us to dream about not only penguins and gauchos but Caliban and Darwin, mobile gas ovens and a Lost City of the Caesars, giant sloths, slaughtered Indians and a carapace of "enormous armadillo...each scale of its armour looking like a Japanese chrysanthemum." To venture next to *The Viceroy of Ouidah* (1980), expecting a slave-trade novel and getting instead a sadomasochistic fantasy of horned vipers, bloody goats, severed heads and Amazons, a voodoo brew of imperialist porn and *candomble* trance-dancing. To continue, chastened, to *On the Black Hill* (1982) alert to sinister subtexts but flummoxed by a lot of Thomas Hardy sheep, dissenting preachers, an Industrial Revolution, class war, Euripides and the Book of Revelation, as well as what John Updike decided must be "a homosexual marriage" of 80-year-old twin brothers waiting for the arrival of a New Jerusalem. And none of this prepared me for *The Songlines* (1987), which is as close as he ever got to the geography in his own head—and even so, the man was missing.

The Songlines *is as close as Chatwin ever got to the geography in his own head—and even so, the man was missing.*

In *The Songlines*, under a ghost-gum tree, attended by dingoes, bush devils and black cockatoos, Chatwin reinvented Australia. Hadn't the Aboriginals specialized in his own sort of walkabout forever? Wasn't all their vast interior a labyrinth of invisible pathways, "Dreaming Tracks" or "Songlines"? Didn't their creation myths tell of legendary totemic beings who wandered the continent in Dreamtime, singing out the names of Fire, Spider, Wind, Grass and Porcupine—and so summoning into existence the very world that would disappear if they didn't hit the road with their own sacred tunes? It seemed to Chatwin that Australia was one big musical score, "a spaghetti of Iliads and Odysseys." Not that he *saw* any of this on either visit. Rather, he *willed* it. According to Pam Bell, a poet who watched him in action: "He knew the mystery was there and he didn't understand it. In *The Songlines*, he was desperately trying to go to the centre. It was the most important thing for him and he realized halfway through he wasn't going to be able to do it. He was excluded. You have to *earn* mystery. It's only lovers who get there." Where he arrived after a couple of hundred pages was back at his notes for a nomad book he'd abandoned before he left for Patagonia. These notes, tacked on and italicized, are *needy*.

He needed ancient Greek and Hebrew, Old Norse, Old English and all of classical mythology to be gigantic songmaps too. He needed there to be a kinship between the songs of Aboriginals, the Gregorian chants of Catholic monks, the mantras of Tibetan lamas and the drumbeats of African shamans. He needed our origins to have been nomadic and pacific, grounded in the "voluntary graces" of food-sharing, gift-giving, song-singing and story-telling. He needed our development of weapons like fire to be defensive, after *Homo erectus* was menaced a million years ago on the open grasslands by a giant predator, *dinofelis*, the beastly Prince of Darkness whose dragon shadow haunts our unconscious to this day. And—because the whole point of our Big Brain is to sing us through the wilderness, and our central nervous system has a built-in "migratory drive" that makes us want to walk all day, and only when we're "warped in conditions of settlement" do we seek "outlets in violence, greed, status-seeking or a mania for the new"—he needed agriculture to be a bad idea and cities even worse. The Noble Savage was Chatwin's kind of guy.

Scientists who are really familiar with nomads tell us they'd just as soon stick around if only the animals let them, and actually like to hitch a ride. But even such wishful thinking—bickered about by competing ethnologists, paleontologists and other desert-crazed monomaniacs who dream our past on an Ice Age toenail or tooth—was still exhilarating to contemplate and also a good reason to leave town.

Except for those of us who prefer to find and lose ourselves in cities—whose idea of a vibrant culture depends a lot on politics, newspapers, movie houses, street lights and streetcars, labor unions and cobblestones, caffeine and maybe even cigarettes. For people like me, who never get out of Paris or St. Petersburg or Bom-

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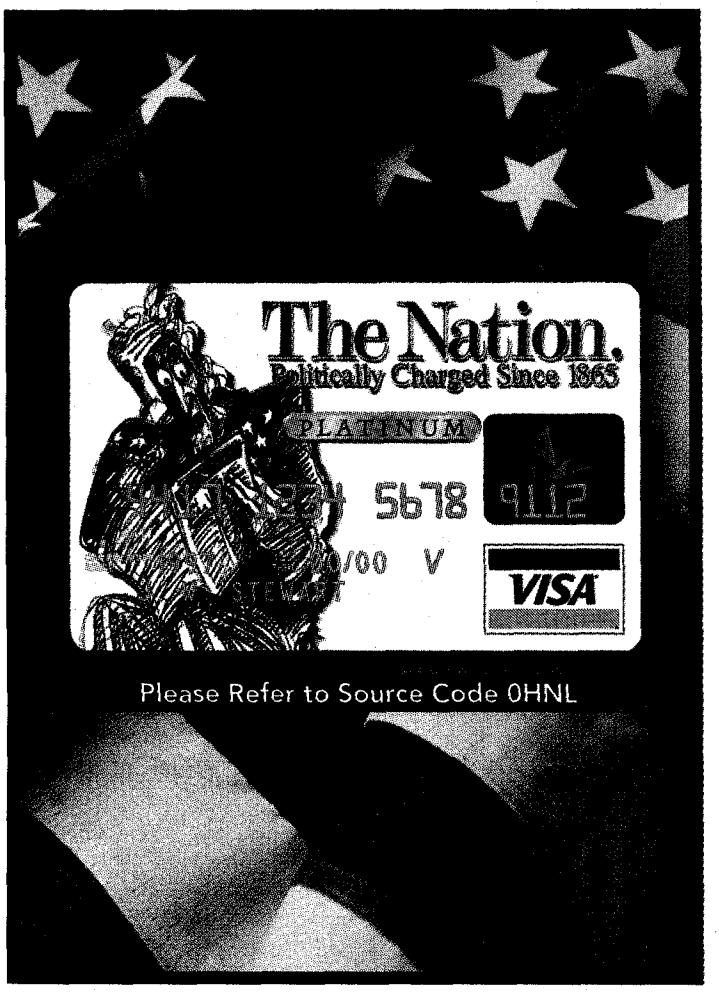

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bay or Istanbul, Noble Savagery is a good reason for *Bruce* to leave town, so the rest of us can read about it without having to. His last novel, *Utz* (1989), disappointed urban types because it was too much about basilisks and unicorn cups and too little about Prague, which he first visited in a fateful 1968.

But he wasn't interested in politics. Other than Britain's bully behavior in the Falklands, which he deplored in a radio talk with Italo Calvino, he seems never to have expressed a political opinion in all his forty-eight years—not about Argentina, Afghanistan, Situationists in Paris, Dubcek in Prague or even the property claims and citizenship rights of modern-day Aboriginals. Nor did gay rights concern him. "Bruce said he had no time for gay politics, or the gay community," says a friend who lived with him in Rio; "and he abhorred the word 'gay.' 'I'd much rather be called a bugger,' and he roared with laughter."

His ambivalence was his impetus. Sexually, Bruce was a polymorphous pervert. Think of the word 'charming.' Think of the word 'seduction.' Think of seduction as a driving force to conquer society.... He's out to seduce everybody, it doesn't matter if you are male, female, an ocelot or a tea cosy.
(Miranda Rothschild)

He slept with everyone, once: it goes with being a great beauty. His sexuality was like his possessions, a means of engaging and also of not engaging with the world. He was profoundly solitary and therefore conducted his sexual activity as a way of connecting with people. At such an industrial rate it meant not an exclusive or intensifying connection; it meant he had *a connection. 'I know this person because I've slept with him/her.' It gave him the right to call someone next time he was in town.* (Susan Sontag)

I never felt he was nearly as much a cruiser or sexually-obsessed person as most of my gang. But I think Bruce had a lot to hide. I think he liked danger. I always assumed he liked being violated in some way and preferably by brigands, gypsies, South American cowboys. It was part of his nomad pattern, to go off into the desert and get raped by Afghan brigands. It's something Lady Hester Stanhope–ish. It wasn't so much the sex as the sauce it came in, some Afghan chieftain draped in a cartridge belt. (John Richardson)

Once upon a time, Chatwin confided to a friend, "You'll never know how *complicated* it is to be bisexual." And one reason we'll never know is that he never told us. Another friend marvels, "Of all the talented brilliant writers, Bruce wrote the shortest sentences I've ever read." Well, he was leaving out a lot. "In the complete works of Bruce Chatwin," says Salman Rushdie, "there is not a loving fuck." But there's plenty of fancy footwork.

I am looking at his posthumously published collection of essays, *What Am I Doing Here* (1989). See him, in the erstwhile Soviet Union, going on about Constructivism. Or in Afghanistan, before it was ruined by Russians and hippies. Or in India, looking for wolfboys, disliking Indira. Or in Nepal, stinking of rancid yak butter, seeking the mythical yeti. Wherever, he meets interesting people, famous or supremely odd. Besides Diana Vreeland, André Malraux and Werner Herzog, there is the Chinese geomancer hired to approve the "dragonlines" of a brand-new Hong Kong bank. And the Englishman, investigating the activities of African Nazis in the late thirties, who is so excited by the idea of "black men in black shirts with red armbands and black swastikas." Stranger still are the friends he makes, like Donald Evans, an American artist in Amsterdam who paints postage stamps for kingdoms of his own invention. Or the South African composer Kevin Volans, who adapts Stockhausen, insect sounds, Zulu guitar music, the chipping of stones and shouts of children for harpsichord and string quartet. And always—whether down the Volga, remembering Turgenev; or up an Everest, reading Dante; or on the pampas, reminded of Stonehenge and the Temple of Heaven, St. Peter's and Red Square, Mecca and Versailles—the same old fierce disdain of cities and the impossibly romantic sympathy for icon-smashers and "anarchic peoples"; those "men of the fringe" who bedeviled Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt; Magyars and Mongols and wolf-masked Huns who rode out of the steppes and into his heart.

From Shakespeare, we know that Bruce near the end of his life talked this same Kevin Volans into composing an opera based on Rimbaud's *Une Saison en enfer*, which he considered "a western Songline," and that he'd wanted to play and sing the poet's part himself. Had Bruce been gang-raped, like Rimbaud during the Paris Commune, like T.E. Lawrence by Turkish soldiers? He hinted so. Shakespeare isn't sure. Maybe he just liked musicals. He had loved *Hair* so much, for instance, that he met with Galt McDermott proposing some-

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thing similar about Ikhnaton, in which the sun-worshiping Pharaoh would uproot his court from Thebes and relocate to, of course, the nomadic Iraqi desert.

When *Utz* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, the satirical magazine *Private Eye* ran this playful description of what it called *Tutsi-Frutsi* by Bruce Hatpin:

> Wry, evocative, sensitive account of a Viennese ice-cream collector who fills his cavernous flat in Marxist Prague with hundreds of different flavoured ice-creams. One day he wakes up and finds that they have all melted. As the *Daily Telegraph* commented: "*Tutsi-Frutsi* is a wry, evocative novella in which ice-cream collecting is used as a paradigm for man's insatiable urge to eternalise the transient." Cheekwin is of course best known for his award-winning cult novel *Tramlines*, which shows how the ancient Incas invented trams. An insatiable nomad, he lives in Notting Hill like everybody else.

Pretty funny. But from Shakespeare we now know everything there is to know, plus what we can't, and more than enough to be sad. In addition to his weird fascination with such Nazi collaborators as Montherlant and Malaparte, and the fact that he once stole a young woman's paperback copy of D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*, and those twenty-three years of marriage during which he never washed a single dish, and his lifelong partiality to a single work of art (a Peruvian wall hanging, probably for an Inca temple, of blue and yellow parrot feathers from a species of papagayo now extinct), we also know about his grandmother's cabinet, his father the sailor, the Mickey Mouse gas mask, the Viking grave, the royal python, the low sperm count ("He can't make babies so he eats them," it was said of Ouidah's Viceroy) and the *Beziehungswahn*, not to mention gold griffins, a throne of skulls, a tub of Crisco, the ecstasy pills and the lithium, Kaposi's sarcoma and black urine.

We wind up with something daunting, as if Nabokov had set out to net a butterfly that was itself a Nabokov, all gaudy wings: a life that was its own secret work of art, an art with that life omitted, a biography that makes both of them more compelling and fosters the queasy feeling that all of us—Chatwin, Shakespeare and the reader too—are equally voyeurs. It was obviously too much to expect that he would tell the truth about his dying when he hadn't told the truth about his living. To the dreadful end, he insisted on what García Márquez has called "the sacred right of the sick to die in peace along with the secret of their illness," dissembling to close friends and his own parents, even exoticizing what he suffered from: It was, he claimed, a bone-marrow-eating fungus peculiar to South Asian bamboo rats he had picked up eating either a slice of raw Cantonese whale or a black egg on the Thai border. Or maybe an Indian amoeba in the bat feces of a Javanese cave he had stumbled into. Better yet, among Chinese peasants in western Yunnan, while he was tracing the footsteps of botanist Joseph Rock, whose book on *The Kingdom of the Na-Khi* had been so much admired by Ezra Pound, perhaps...and so on, as if the deathbed were a proscenium arch.

OK, even if some overdue honesty might have helped dispel the hateful superstitions of the plague years, I am not so presumptuous as to instruct a stranger on how to die heroically. We didn't know about Rock Hudson in advance, so why should we have known about Bruce Chatwin? Who says writers have a higher obligation than actors? Or politicians? Or Han tortoise inkwells and Easter Island canoe paddles? Tell it to your Christos Pantokrator. ■

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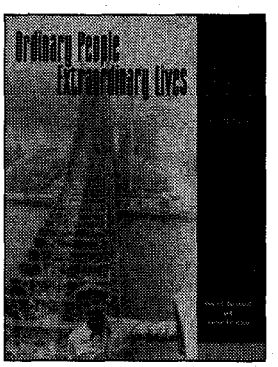

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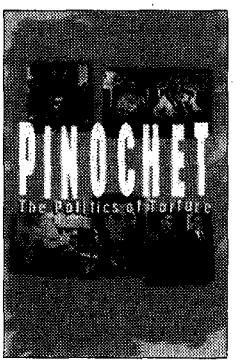

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Discovery/*The Nation* '00 Prizewinners

Once again, The Nation *announces the winners of Discovery/*The Nation, *the Joan Leiman Jacobson Poetry Prize. Now in its twenty-sixth year, the annual contest celebrates poets whose work has not been published previously in book form. The new winners are: Erin Grace Brooks, Anthony Deaton, Andrew Feld and Sue Kwock Kim. This year's judges are Mark Doty, Marie Howe and Susan Mitchell. Distinguished former winners of the competition, in which manuscripts are screened and judged anonymously, include Susan Mitchell, Katha Pollitt, Mary Jo Salter, Sherod Santos, Arthur Smith and David St. John. This year's winners will read their poems at Discovery/*The Nation *'00 at 8:15 PM on Monday, April 17, at The Unterberg Poetry Center, 92nd Street Y, 1395 Lexington Avenue in New York City.* —*Grace Schulman, poetry editor*

After Troy

Not quite putting on what little power or knowledge
pigeons lay claim to, she nonetheless bids them come.
Launched off cornices,

cathedral arches, they glide
through the gelid air in loose spirals, filling the square.
Their wings beat a thin flat thunder.

She's drifted in from the soot-marbled
housing blocks piled across the Vistula,
making her tram-line pilgrimage among the other pensioners

who haunt the Old Town's benches.
Strewn about her feet are crumbled bits of bread crust
and each cupped palm she extends offers more.

The birds pullulate around her ankles,
roost on her shoulders. Aloof from the others,
one fatted pigeon mounts the faded

purple beret she wears against the late October freeze.
This is when I steal the photo.
All day I've kept the camera hidden inside an overcoat pocket,

afraid reducing Warsaw's rebuilt bell towers
and cobblestone vistas to thirty-six frames per roll
would give me away as something I can't help

not wanting to be. Yet I cannot resist the old lady
capped and gowned, as she is, in feather.
She lifts her arms to either side. The unmindful pigeons crowd,

peck along her flightless limbs, mocking her gravity
as they alternately spread and fold their wings.
Or maybe it isn't mockery, but a mutual love that keeps them

flapping there and holds the woman still,
engenders in that coupling a dream of union,
where one light step might shift their weight to sky.

Anthony Deaton

Hanji: Notes for a Paper-Maker

for Liu Yoon-Young

Shaped like a slab of granite
marking a grave, but light,
airy as "spirit-sheaves" lashed
from bloodroot or star-thistle,

this sheet is not for burial
but making and making of:
a caul of splinters boiled to pith,
broth cast then clotted to blank.

I touch it, feeling grit and slub
silk, rough as braille. Is it
enough, is this what you dreamed
of doing, making absence

palpable as pulp, though you laugh,
seeing I'm shocked at how much work
it took. Sow and mulch mulberry.
Slash trunks down a year later—

chopping slant to sun so stumps
heal, regrow—when their wood's
tender but strong enough to keep,
no worms gnawing fleam or burl.

Soak, hack the black bark off,
tilt your knife at a sharp angle
to skive the green underskin
without cutting away good grain.

Scald the peeled rods with cotton-ash
so acid softens gnurl and knot.
Pound for hours until they're ground
to shreds, skeins of unlikely thread.

You show me your blistered hands.
Poor hands. When you strike a match
to fire, I almost feel the skin sting,

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kerosene flaming *yontan*-coal.

I don't know what it costs you to love
this work. More than sulfur fumes
tasting of slag, flintsparks cracking,
engine-shunt as your cauldron simmers

hollyhock root to solder all
the elements in a strange solution,
an ecstasy, flecks shapeshifting,
hissing milk, spit, quicksilver.

While it smolders you drag
hung mold and slung bamboo-grill,
sieving with steady arms, long strokes
so fiber won't snarl at the heart.

You wring water, strip your grid,
letting grume clot to the hue
of skull-rot. It'll bleach in sun
to snow, tusk-tallow, peroxide—

depending how long it's left out,
on weather—or you'll dye it
with beets, indigo, sweet potato,
all the colors you have in mind.

In my mind you've become stern.
"For what you want to be, nothing
is something from another slant,
a slate, a plot to engrave spirit

in flesh, mirror or window on an O.
Now you know how hard the labor is.
If your words aren't worth
my work, keep your mouth shut."

Sue Kwock Kim

Used by the Kind Permission of...

for P.T.

Woken, at six a.m., by the dense mist of song
triggered by the sun's rising, we recognized
the first trick in that well-practiced sleight-of-hand
morning would unfold for us: those small dots
of clear light placed on the spider's web outside,
that shallow orange ribbon cut into the sandy drive.

And there were other signs, even when the afternoon
had been reduced to just the single mockingbird
and his sped-up, bad memory of other musics,
that acknowledgments remained unsaid, as when
you explained the discipline, the years of work
that gave such ease to the flippant conversations

in the movie we watched that night, the uncredited
studio-servitude which made possible that careful
choreography of speech—an art as lost now
as that which made the banks of glass flowers
in the Natural History Museum, the translucent
fibrous stalk of the iris, the fretwork of decay.

There, under fluorescent fixtures, a coelacanth,
deep in a silt of ancient brown formaldehyde,
turned its pre-historic eye towards the empty case
you said contained antique sunlight, or could be
a cenotaph for what can't be captured, as leaves
scratched at the window, pushed by restless air.

Andrew Feld

Concerning Starling's Law of the Heart

"...the critical factor controlling stroke volume is the pre-load or degree of stretch of the cardiac muscle cells just before they contract."
—*Marieb's Human Anatomy and Physiology*

House a pump in four chambers,
arteries and veins for pipes, valves
for valves, pacemaker a tap

that won't quit running. Let it.
This is the sound of hope, deaf
to the world, which in any case

has grown fond of complaining
to itself. Forget the world.
The matter at hand is plumbing—

good plumbing, too—the kind
that won't clog on its own grief
and biles, nor corrode from

the sour spillage of anyone else.
Say one day disease embraces you
like a beloved, and won't let go:

Until death do us part. To you,
it will feel that the pump in your
chest has plunged straight out

the window, and of course
it's a great loss—it's everything.
But your heart won't break

or burst. Though it may not
be whole exactly, it will work—
will beat every day of your life

in order to pump down to the last
blessed drop all the blood
presented to it, and even a flood

would make it work just that much
harder. You can depend on it
by law. Frank-Starling's Law.

Consider starlings, how they sing so
in their river oak that turning at night
from the darkness of Richmond to

Montrose, the blast of fortitude and joy
knocks the breath from your chest,
sets your dumb heart throbbing:

What is there to say? Consider
it said. If my heart were more,
more would be laid at your feet.

Erin Grace Brooks

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BOOK NOTE

Reparting the Waters

JASON SOKOL

I MAY NOT GET THERE WITH YOU: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.
By Michael Eric Dyson. Free Press. 404 pp. $25.

It is delightfully ironic that a site has been approved for the construction of a monument in Martin Luther King Jr.'s name on the Washington Mall, given that in the last months of his life, King's ambitious goal was to set up tent encampments of the nation's poor on that very Mall, to bring the specter of poverty directly under the eye of the government and to peacefully but forcefully disrupt the functioning of the nation's capital. Michael Eric Dyson has rescued King's vision from bland, unthreatening co-optations in his book *I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.*, placing the radical face back on this sanitized hero. Dyson understands King's "dream" to be revolutionary, filled with contradictions rather than concord, stemming as much from rage at a sick nation as from hope of a better one.

As Dyson points out, the dream that King spoke of at the 1963 March on Washington may have hailed the harmony of a color-blind society in the future, but such "a beautiful symphony of brotherhood" would be achieved only after tumultuous transformations. Dyson puts forth a modest proposal of sorts, suggesting a moratorium on King's "I Have a Dream" speech. The Reverend himself later acknowledged that "'not long after talking about' the dream in Washington, 'I started seeing it turn into a nightmare.'" He warned of the conflagrations, rebellions and dislocations that would persist until the American dream existed as a reality for all. After the Voting Rights Act of 1965, King fixed his gaze upon a host of previously untackled problems. The goal was no longer legal rights for black Americans; rather, King struck at issues that lurk in the dark underbelly of America—problems of power, privilege and the bond between race and class.

The question of how to portray King is a battle not only over interpretations of history but of how to use memory in the present and future. King's own economic views were fleshed out and changed over time; by the end of his life, he was an avowed democratic socialist. He found himself advocating radical redistribution of wealth and power in the name of truth, equality and American ideals. In the best parts of his work, Dyson moves beyond an exaltation of King and into ruminations on race, and how King's dream dealt with the same problems that bedevil America today. He is incisive on the nature of black American heroes like King and Muhammad Ali, who after they die or fall ill are "fashioned to deflect our fears and fulfill our fantasies...who cheer us up more than they challenge or change us."

Throughout, Dyson seems to view King as more shaped by his faith than by other people around him. Thus, Dyson's work is aptly titled, and fits into a long lineage of studies of King whose titles project King as messianic. *I May Not Get There With You* continues a tradition, ranging from Stephen Oates's *Let the Trumpet Sound* to Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters*, David Garrow's *Bearing the Cross* and Adam Fairclough's *To Redeem the Soul of America*. The immediate image conveyed is of a great man leading his people out of the wilderness and into the promised land. By placing a primacy on King's faith, however, Dyson does not pay enough attention to the essential dialectic between leader and follower. There is no question that King gained awe-inspiring strength from his faith, that he saw his initial leadership role as descending from heaven, a role that he seemed to know would one day cost him his life. But, as King scholar Clayborne Carson writes, "The notion that...Great Men (or Great Women) are necessary preconditions for the emergence of major movements...reflects...a pessimistic view of the possibilities for future social change."

Dyson writes, "The tension between following God—into the ghetto, into sanitation strikes...into rural Mississippi poverty—while refusing to follow conventional political logic, led King to radical-

Jason Sokol is a writer whose most recent work has appeared in Feed *and* TomPaine.

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ism." While Dyson acknowledges the vital role of "ordinary folk" in the movement, King seemed more shaped by his followers than Dyson allows. In some instances, King increasingly saw himself as a helper in local movements for change. As historian, activist and former King speechwriter Vincent Harding puts it, "He made so much history, but in doing so he was aided, limited and defined by the struggle that was mounting all around him, making him."

In the years of 1967 and 1968, King endured a period in which his leadership was being fundamentally challenged. His nonviolent tactics seemed outdated as Black Power gained steam, despite the fact that the two strands of the movement may have generally been more in concert than disagreement. Embroiled in a radical campaign that challenged the existing power structure, he was no longer loved by Washington. While a colleague once described him as having "one foot firmly planted in the cotton field, the other in the White House," King was becoming more and more absorbed by the field each day.

In the spring of 1968, he came to Memphis at the behest of its local black leadership to help in a sanitation workers' strike which had begun in February. The black workers of Memphis understood their dignity as people to be at stake, and marched clothed in signs declaring, "I Am a Man." When Jesse Jackson and James Bevel (Southern Christian Leadership Conference staffers at the time) expressed reservations about going to Memphis, King lectured that "he had gone to Memphis for the same reasons he went anywhere: he was asked by the people who were fighting for basic civil and human rights." King later remarked to friend Stanley Levison, "I've never seen a community as together as Memphis." He very much needed a strong movement, and he lent his voice to the Memphis workers without hesitation. In the first march led by King, violence broke out. He was whisked away from the scene, and his role as the world's foremost advocate of nonviolence was in doubt. When King returned to Memphis to lead a peaceful march, he delivered his final and most prophetic speech, in which he foresaw his own death. "I think in a rare moment born of inner turmoil... during those days in which his leadership was sorely questioned and challenged, he may have seen, as we could not, that his time was passing," Andrew Young writes in his book *An Easy Burden*.

By the time of his death, King was a radically changed man. Not only was he attacking problems of power and wealth but

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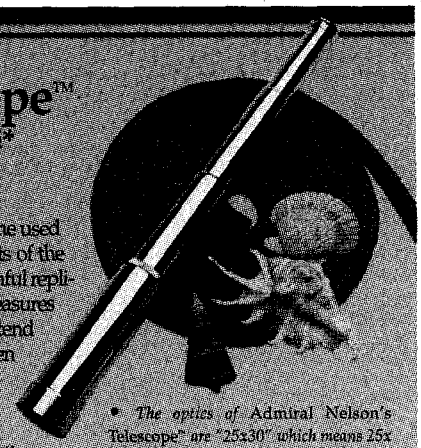

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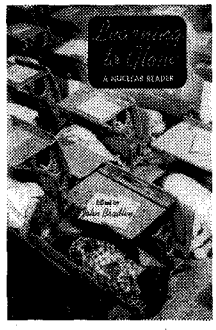

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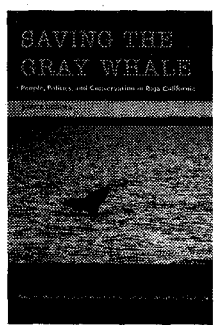

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he was speaking for a different segment of people—a people who were gradually defining their leader. He was trying to find the voice not of those who had no rights but of the truly alienated, the weakest and poorest in society. David Halberstam writes, "Their voice is harsh and alienated. If King is to speak for them truly, then his voice must reflect theirs; it too must be alienated."

Ralph Abernathy, King's closest confidant and his successor as head of SCLC, recounted how King was deeply affected by his trips to bastions of rural poverty. King "had seen a vision in Marks, Mississippi, that would haunt him for the rest of his short life," Abernathy noted. King did not just champion their cause—he was profoundly shaped by the struggle that he came to symbolize. Whether or not he was led into Mississippi, Chicago and Memphis by God, he was following those who were fighting for their dignity.

Dyson's book may have flaws but is deeply important—a timely resurrection that points to the contemporary usefulness of Martin Luther King's vision, a vital portrait of a radical activist who sought to alter the workings of power in America. His goal was nothing short of revolutionary, his end the stuff of dreams. ■

FILMS

Semper Fi, But Why?

STUART KLAWANS

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT • HIGH FIDELITY • AMERICAN PSYCHO • SET ME FREE

Were I to tell you that *Rules of Engagement* features a protracted fistfight between Samuel L. Jackson and Tommy Lee Jones, undertaken with broken glass and thunderous sound effects, you might assume the picture to be one of those old-tough-guy hoke-a-thons, like *El Dorado*. If I went on to say that Jackson and Jones portray Marine Corps colonels—the former facing court martial and the latter serving as his attorney, with both given the opportunity to bellow in close-up—you would change your reference to *A Few Good Men*. And if I were to add that the film pauses to depict an open-air hospital in Yemen filled with children who were shot to pieces by Jackson's Marines, you might give up on classification and think of the exceptional *Three Kings*.

Yes, *Rules of Engagement* transcends the usual movie categories; but it does so in order to drop into a more influential genre of fiction, that of the military press briefing. I commend the film to your attention because its story-writer, who was also an executive producer, is James Webb: Marine commander in Vietnam, Secretary of the Navy in 1987–88, popular novelist, freelance explainer on TV programs. In him we see united three functions of the national security state: implementing policy, making policy, justifying policy through the media. Given his authorship, *Rules of Engagement* is more than an entertainment and more than a statement of official thinking. It ought to be considered a continuation of war by other means.

The pretext for Webb's present maneuver is a story of good men sent to do a tough job, as Tommy Lee Jones puts it more than twice. When an angry crowd gathers before the US Embassy in Yemen, Jackson and his Marines fly to the scene with orders to protect the building and evacuate it if necessary. As the helicopters descend, Jackson sees that the situation is more serious than he'd been told; he'll be dealing with snipers, Molotov cocktails and battering rams. Fortunately, there's a back door. (It took the joint efforts of Webb and a professional screenwriter, Stephen Gaghan, to make that one up.) Having sneaked into the embassy, Jackson evacuates the personnel (all three of them) but comes under a barrage of bullets. In the heat of combat, he orders his men to return fire, shooting into the crowd.

The following day, newspapers around the world publish the outcome: eighty-three dead and a hundred wounded, many of them women and children. Someone must answer for the massacre, and the National Security Adviser decides it won't be the US government. Jackson will take the blame, by himself.

By the way: Why were the Yemenis rioting? The US ambassador's young son asks that question during the siege, while cower-

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ing in a corridor. From his mother comes as much of an answer as Webb cares to give: "The people are mad about something, darling," an explanation addressed not only to the boy but to the audience, whose mental age Webb must calculate as no more than 9. Why, for that matter, do Jackson and Jones tromp through Vietnam in the film's prologue, set in 1968? Again, Webb would prefer not to ask, or rather not to have you ask. All he wants you to know (say it with me, please) is that these are good men sent to do a tough job—the standard operational lie at the rotten heart of the movie.

Like any effective falsehood, this one has a core of truth. The US military is indeed a tool of civilian policy-makers and (by extension) of the citizens themselves, who bear ultimate responsibility for its actions. It would therefore be logical to conclude that citizens have not only the right but the responsibility to judge the military. But members of the national security state such as Webb despise the bonds of logic. They want nothing less than perfect freedom, and so they place off-limits both reason and reasons alike. We must never ask why the military has gone to blow up a territory (though we ostensibly made the decision); and we are never to judge how the military conducts the blowing-up, since we were not the people under fire.

Rules of Engagement is an illogic machine, constructed to remove the inconvenience of thought from anyone who might question a half-century of America's war-making. First, with more brutality than cunning, the movie entices you to condemn Samuel Jackson, who leaves behind not only piles of corpses but also those children in the hospital, including a cute little one-legged girl who hops around with a crutch. Then, with more highhandedness than legerdemain, the movie exonerates Jackson, showing that the Yemenis deserved to become corpses. Those women and children were armed, and even the cute amputee popped away at Marines. Imagine Spielberg's girl-in-a-red-coat in *Schindler's List* as a guerrilla, attacking soldiers who'd been sent on a tough job.

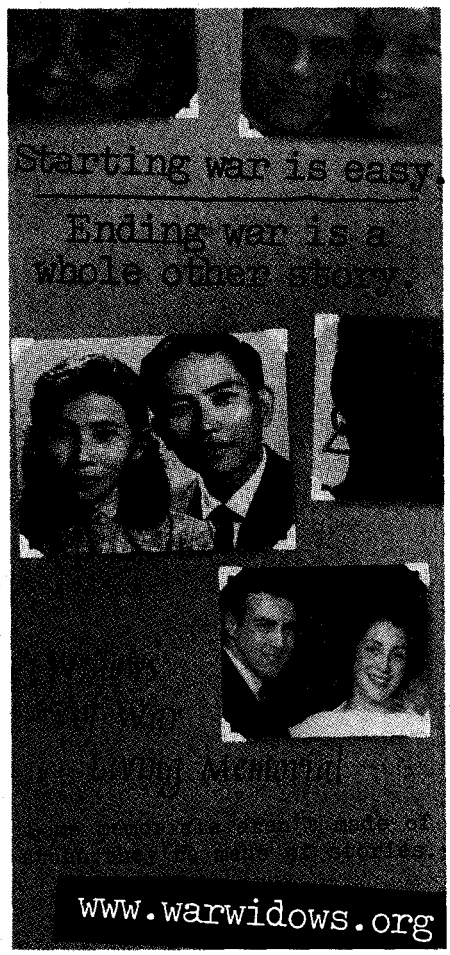
Although William Friedkin is credited with directing the brutal highhandedness—was a filmmaker ever more qualified?—the film's worldview and purpose clearly issue from a higher command. (And make no mistake, high command is the film's sole concern. Though the well-being of "the men" excuses any sin, the ranks in this movie go by in a blur. Only officers matter.) By the time the mission is accomplished, Webb even has a former North Vietnamese colonel saluting Jackson—as if to sweep away piles of real corpses along with the fictional stiffs.

Rules of Engagement would like you to forget how our national security state behaved in Vietnam, in pursuit of its perfect freedom. (Were the women and children at My Lai armed and dangerous?) More important, the movie would like you to stay the hell out of the way of the national security state today. Those good men still have their job to do, especially in the Middle East—and it's too damn bad if some ragheads get in the way. For example: In July 1988 we blew to bits no fewer than 290 unarmed civilians in the Persian Gulf in an incident that rather undermines the movie's premise, since we outdid the body count by 207, and yet scarcely bothered to grunt "Sorry." To the official mind, the victims deserved to die. They'd had the effrontery to pass over the USS Vincennes in a regularly scheduled commercial flight from Iran.

In fairness to Webb, I note that by then he was no longer Secretary of the Navy. Unable to continue serving in good conscience, he had resigned in February—complaining of the budget.

But enough of bad politics and bad movies. It's the weekend, and you want to see something. Will anything out there hit the spot?

The best of the recent American releases is certainly *High Fidelity*, an amiably unambitious stroll through the love life of a Chicago guy who owns a vintage-record store. John Cusack plays the mope, still dressed as a college student though in his mid-30s, still living in a dim apartment with bamboo shades over the windows, who drags on cigarettes and grumbles his dissatisfactions straight into the camera, explaining how a life devoted to the angst expressed in pop music has gone along with a history of romantic misery. His past girlfriends (all girlfriends are by definition past) range in height from Catherine Zeta-Jones to Lili Taylor, with mid-size Iben Hjelje as the most recently departed. Perhaps you've seen Hjelje in *Mifune*. She's Denmark's answer to Sandra Bullock, and she's quite good in *High Fidelity*, despite the strain of playing a woman who unaccountably returns to the chronically gloomy Cusack. I guess he's like the hole in the middle of the vinyl, inexorably drawing the needle to himself. With him as the central character, the movie might collapse into itself, grow infinitely dense and implode, were it not for the presence of Jack Black in a supporting role as one of the record-store clerks. Black is a short, chubby lord of misrule, whose repertoire of dirty grins and



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hand-jives is made complete at the end of the picture, at a moment that is both predictable and fully satisfying, when he proves he can sing like Marvin Fucking Gaye. Stephen Frears directed, from a screenplay based on the novel by Nick Hornby.

I had my hopes for *American Psycho*, based on a novel by you-know-who, since it's directed by Mary Harron. Perhaps she could do for an eighties subculture of bankers and stockbrokers what she did for a sixties subculture in *I Shot Andy Warhol*. And, in the event, the film has a few things to recommend it. In the title role, Christian Bale is buffed, tanned, exfoliated and moussed to within an inch of his life and yet still manages to act his ass off. It's a big performance, set within a giggle-inducing world of exquisitely bad taste. (Harron gets the most out of a waiter's presentation of squid ravioli with lemongrass sauce.) For a while, it seemed as if this satirical chop-'em-up would have the appeal of an old Dr. Phibes picture. But then: The pointlessness of the story turns out to be the point, and the figure of the serial-killer yuppie turns out to be a metaphor only for himself. From such drivel, there can be no rescue.

So I will instead recommend a foreign film: *Set Me Free*, written and directed by Léa Pool. It's the ideal film-festival movie: a story of teenage lesbian infatuation, incestuous longings and movie worship, set in French-speaking Canada and involving a mother who goes mad and a father who is a poet, a Jew, a Holocaust survivor and a Communist. Has anything been left out? No—but neither is anything overstated or forced, in one of the brightest coming-of-age films I've seen in a while. ■

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■ June 4–11. "Peacebuilding in the 21st Century." A radical, 7-day inquiry into the root causes of war and the systems that perpetuate it. Featuring Tom Hayden, Susan Griffin, Sam Keen, Anne Wilson Schaef, Arun Gandhi, Jean Houston, Vesna Terselic, Sulak Sivaraksa, Jodie Evans and others. The goal? To create and support nonviolent methods of responding to conflict. Join us on the exquisite Adriatic coast! Georgia Kelly, director. Call (707) 939-2973; fax (707) 939-6720; e-mail trisha@winslowevents.com; visit website pathwaystopeace.org/dubrovnik.htm.

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NEW JERSEY

Election 2000: A Space Odyssey

■ Cedar Grove, NJ. Jim Hightower, America's favorite progressive populist, will discuss "Election 2000: A Space Odyssey," at New Jersey Peace Action's 43rd Annual Dinner, Sunday, May 21, in Cedar Grove. Author of *If the Gods Had Meant Us to Vote They Would Have Given Us Candidates*, Hightower addresses the election campaign with wit and hard-hitting political commentary. Contact (973) 744-3263 or njsane@igc.org for information/reservations.

NEW YORK

Physicians for a National Healthcare Program

■ Tuesday April 18, 7:30 PM. Physicians for a National Health Program–NY Chapter invites medical professionals and the general public to join in a discussion with Arthur Levin, director of the Center for Medical Consumers, on the critical issues of medical mistakes raised by the Institute of Medicines's recent report, *To Err Is Human: Building a Safer Health System*, at Beth Israel's Phillips Ambulatory Care Center, 10 Union Sq. East (between 14th and 15th Streets), 2nd floor Lecture Hall. Admission free. For further information contact Joanne Landy, (212) 666-4001.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Monday. Rates: $75 for up to 50 words; $100 for up to 75 words. To place an ad, call Tomasina at (212) 242-8400, ext. 201.

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ORGANIZATIONS

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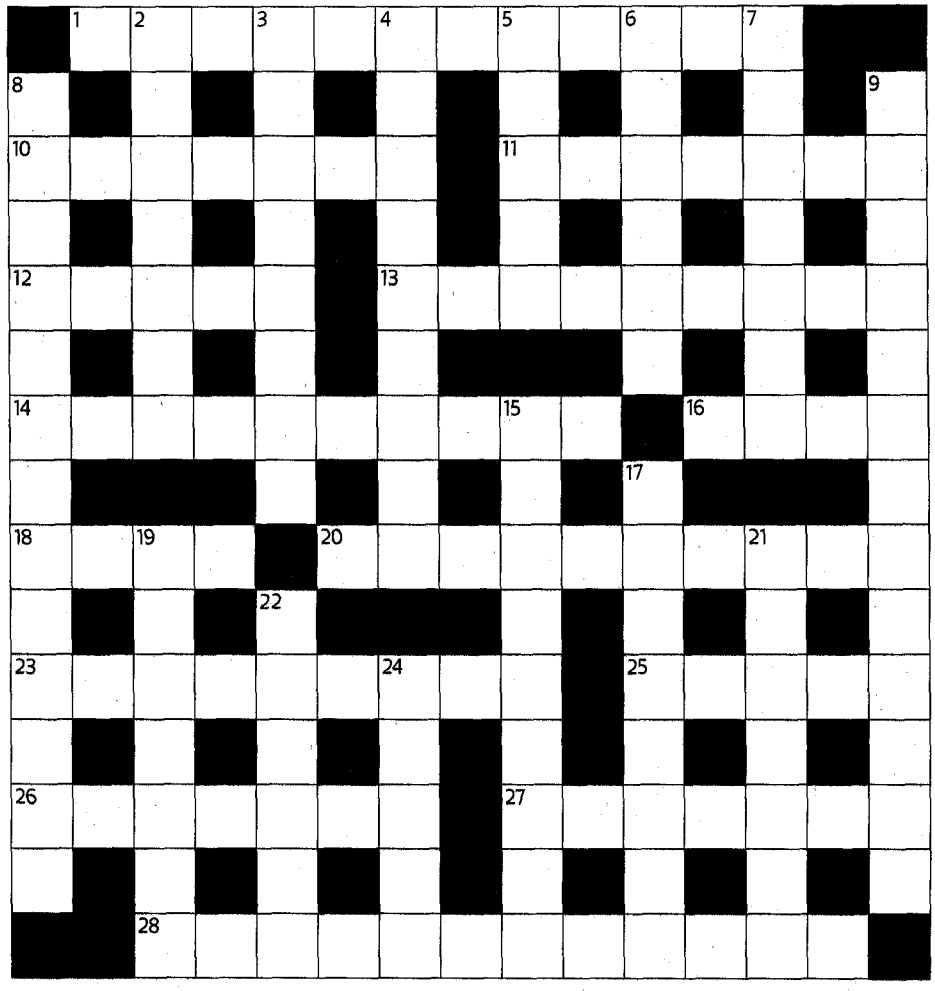

ACROSS

1 Old saying contained in the handouts of what the carpenters use? (8,4)

10 Silver or gold is nothing to a "flake" possibly, to decorate certain officers? (3,4)

11 Not quite remitted to become a nuisance around the house! (7)

12 Is the nut OK to make what might be a lash of leather? (5)

13 Where they are said to go to die with something you shouldn't do where those in command might come from. (4,5)

14 Perhaps a childish game, but it's an assignment quite removed from the frozen stuff. (4,6)

16 Perhaps lied as to the source of those cold cuts… (4)

18 and **5** down …and what they traditionally make in Belgium has a standing with cuts, too! (9)

20 Proper meat in ground beef might show what is going through completely. (10)

23 The reason you might get bitten by the dance craze? (9)

25 A letter from Athens not quite fit for nonuniform purposes? (5)

26 It's the time to make air, removing something you don't want. (7)

27 Comparatively limp? (His possibly appears in drag.) (7)

28 Concerning the main part of the apportionment, it might be necessary before voting. (12)

DOWN

2 They used to hold things described as blacks and blues, turning to pinks. (3-4)

3 The starting point of an oratorio? (8)

4 The sort of fault few "F" types of wartime fliers displayed. (9)

5 See 18 across

6 The wrong bar put out in short order. (6)

7 Improperly used around here, according to Parisians—but it's one way out, minus any assistance. (7)

8 One might before shaving and after exercise. (4,2,1,6)

9 A driving place, not wide, but creating big smiles around the capital of Germany. (The little ones are quiet with them.) (8,5)

15 One who arrives to see about the damn trouble with the boss? (9)

17 Some might get confused inside the shopping area, which is kind of squirrelly! (8)

19 The old marauder has a crude manner, one hears. (7)

21 The way one might gather something? On the contrary, it's a place one doesn't want to be consigned to! (7)

22 One might look for a happy one as a novel proceeding. (6)

24 Surge out with what might be eggs. (5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, *The Nation*, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/print/hints.

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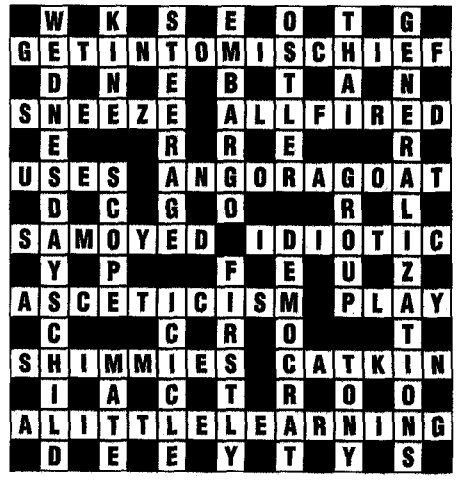

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